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THE CHURCH  
IN  
RELATION TO SCEPTICS

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

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**PROBLEMS OF  
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# THE CHURCH

IN

## RELATION TO SCEPTICS

A CONVERSATIONAL GUIDE TO  
EVIDENTIAL WORK

✓ BY THE REV.

ALEX. J. HARRISON, M.A., B.D.

EVIDENTIAL MISSIONER OF THE CHURCH PAROCHIAL MISSION SOCIETY  
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1896

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INSCRIBED

WITH GRATEFUL AFFECTION

TO THE

VERY REVEREND THE DEAN OF BRISTOL  
(FRANCIS PIGOU, D.D.)

TO WHOSE

SYMPATHY, COUNSEL, AND ENCOURAGEMENT,

DURING MANY YEARS OF ARDUOUS WORK,

THE AUTHOR IS DEEPLY INDEBTED.





## PREFACE

THIS work is so naturally the sequel to my "Problems," that it hardly seems to need a preface. I must, however, express my profound gratitude to the Church Parochial Mission Society, and especially to the Rev. W. Hay Aitken, for the continued opportunity of doing evidential work, and for the kindness with which they, and all the clergy whose parishes I have visited, and with whom the conversations recorded in these pages have been carried on, have uniformly treated me. I have but to add that no one but myself is responsible for the views herein expressed, and to utter the earnest hope and desire that this work may come, at least, within sight of being as useful as it is meant to be.

A. J. H.

LIGHTCLIFFE VICARAGE, HALIFAX,

*July 29th, 1892.*



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## INTRODUCTION—THE BOOK.

1. *Introduction.*—I hear you have written another book. What is it about?

Here it is. It consists of answers I have, from time to time, given to evidential questions, put to me by the clergy.

The clergy are, of course, eager to profit by your lengthened experience. But do you not sometimes meet with men too self-satisfied to learn from any one?

Scarcely at all. Men of that kind do not care to ask an evidential missionary to their parishes. But, as a rule, the clergy err by self-distrust rather than by self-confidence. Many of them, indeed, have paid little attention to evidences; occasionally, they do not feel the need; oftener, they have not the time. Yet, there are large numbers who know much on the subject, and some who have literally forgotten more than I have learned.

2. *Clerical Knowledge of Christian Evidence.*—That is, possibly, true, but, as far as I have had the opportunity of observing, I should not suppose ordinary parish priests have much acquaintance with the evidences of Christianity.

I think you are mistaken there. It is true that young men fresh from college are, in most cases, very badly equipped for evidential work. I have had several conversations on the subject with bishops and their examining chaplains, and they are unanimous on this

point. The bishop of one of our largest dioceses told me that the ignorance of Christian evidences shown by candidates for holy orders was most deplorable. Another said that, in a recent examination, there was a good deal of easy writing about the "higher criticism," without much evidence that the writers had even an elementary acquaintance with the real meaning of that criticism. They were like girls talking politics. He added, "Almost any child of eleven or twelve years of age, in our national schools, would have answered better in Bible history."

That is decidedly startling, but is it not "confirmation strong as Holy Writ" of my statement?

"No; it is, on the contrary, no confirmation at all. You are not scientific enough. (Smiling.) Your remark was made of the ordinary clergy; I am speaking of candidates for holy orders. You overlook what is learned in the second university. Most of our clergy, I hope, graduate not only at Oxford, or Cambridge, or Dublin, or Durham, or London, but also in the "university of experience." And, I think, the majority of senior curates and incumbents are fairly well up in the subject.

3. *Object of the Present Book.*—Thank you for your passing lesson in the use of the scientific method (laughing). Seriously, I will take the lesson to heart. But if they are, as you say, fairly well up in the subject, what is the object of your book?

I will tell you. It is to help men to use the knowledge they have. It is not enough to have a well-furnished armoury. One must know how to handle his weapons, and, also, what weapons to handle. It is just here that my experience may be of service to others. It is true that another's experience can never be a substitute for one's own. But it is also true that another's experience

may help us to use our own. If this were not so, a great sadness would fall on the hearts of parents. Most of our children are born before our experience is at all large. It cannot, therefore, for the most part, be transmitted as hereditary tendency, and if we could not employ it for their benefit, as it increases and they grow, its acquisition would lose half its motive. It is surely the greatest joy of knowledge, and the greatest consolation of the suffering its acquisition so often involves, that it can be used in the service of others.

4. *Meaning of the Title.*—Is not the title you have chosen a little misleading? For example, would it not excite expectation of historical treatment?

Perhaps. But readers know that I do not consider myself qualified to go at all beyond such things as my special experience suggests. Indeed, no one is less competent than myself to judge of the value of what I have written from the strictly “dogmatic” standpoint. There is nothing “academic” in this book. Whether I could write a formal treatise, I do not know, having never tried. And I have not tried for two reasons. The first is that I do not believe in my own capacity. The second is that I am not likely ever to have the time. It would take twenty years to prepare the kind of work that seems to me necessary, and, even in that time, it could not be done without the aid of, at least, ten or twelve helpers. A work on Christian evidence *sufficient in itself* would take years for one point alone, and that a point which only scholars could appreciate—the verification of every alleged fact stated, and of every quotation given. In nothing is the rule more imperative than in Christian-evidence works—verify your references. I have done, however, what I felt able to do. I have stated those things in the

relation of the Church to sceptics which my own experience has forced into prominence, and I think this sufficiently justifies the title. I hope you will not think that this has involved no labour. On the contrary, it, conjointly with my other books, and with my ordinary duties, has taken up, on an average of many years, ten hours daily work. One detail may interest you. I had to consult fifteen authors before I could find the authority for a statement they all made. I am doubtful if I should have found it yet, had it not been for hints given me by Bishop Westcott and Professor Salmon.

5. *Specific Purpose.*—Beyond general helpfulness you contemplate some special aim, do you not?

You have noticed that! My special aim is to aid in the *comprehension* of what is called "scepticism." I cannot regard it as simply a specific condition outside of the Church. In one sense, I do not believe any man is an atheist; in another, I believe every man is. Let me give you an illustration. I suppose the motive of monasticism was escape from the world. But all of those who thus retired took a certain amount of the world with them, and many of them forgot the fact. Now worldliness is really atheism as a spirit; and Christians very commonly forget that to be worldly is to be atheistical. To comprehend atheism, therefore, is to comprehend worldliness, and to comprehend worldliness, one must begin with his own heart. Then, next, the hard experience of life, including and emphasizing one's own sins and follies, which, within the Church, results in a discontented attitude towards Providence, is essentially the same thing as that which, without the Church, results in more or less dogmatic atheism. Again, the particular difficulties which, within, result in relaxed hold of Christ the Saviour, are not really

of a different character from those which, without, result in detachment from the Church altogether. Once more, those questionings which, within, result in an attitude of suspended belief, are nearly, if not quite, identical with those which, without, result, not in disbelief, not even in unbelief, but simply in that condition in which a man cannot call himself by any name but that of an inquirer. It does not strictly belong to my subject, but one word I must add. The baseness which, in the one case, expresses itself in conventional agreement with the Church because that suits it best, is really one with that which, in the other case, falls in with antagonism to the Church, simply because that is most harmonious with its temper. Whatever the forms, whether unbelief, doubt, or questionings, it is indispensable that we begin with ourselves. In no other way shall we ever understand.

6. *Plan of the Book.*—What is your plan? How do you carry out your principle?

The plan is the natural outcome of a principle which may be called the interpretation of experience. The work is divided into introduction, four books, and conclusion. The first book deals with Method, and consists of chapters on the object of evidential work, the causes of unbelief, evidential agencies, arguments in general, and the function of evidence. The remaining books are all, in fact, illustrations of the method set forth in the first. In the second it is applied to Unbelief, and treats of the theories of scepticism and of secularism; the name secularism; the principles, as a secularist, of Mr. Holyoake; the principles, as a secularist, of Mr. Bradlaugh; and of secularism as atheism. In the third book it is applied to Doubt—considered as faith, as limitation of faith, as inquiry, as criticism, and as misapprehension. In the



fourth book it is applied to Questionings, and deals with science, Christ's recognition of science, some special questions, evolution, and the present-future life. The Conclusion gives additional hints drawn from experience as an evidential missionary.

BOOK I.

METHOD.



## CHAPTER I.

### OBJECT.

1. *Introduction.*—I may take it for granted that all you have written is intended to meet needs of one kind or another ; but there may be some points you would like to specify separately ?

There are some to which I should like to call attention at once. And first with reference to the work of societies. Years ago I had to answer to myself the question, Is the lack of adequate support to the Christian Evidence Society to be regarded as the result of a reasoned conviction that it is not needed, or as simply an inertia of indifference to be overcome ? The latter is surely the true answer. But whether through the instrumentality of that society, which is more hampered than helped by its undenominational basis, or that of the Church Parochial Mission Society, which deserves the highest praise for the way in which it has taken the question up, there is work of the greatest value waiting to be done.

2. *Needed Work.*—Work by whom and where ?

In addition to the agencies described in the third chapter, there are several others wanted. I wish I could persuade every rural dean to have a meeting at least once a year of his clergy to listen to the counsels of experts in this subject. Then I should like to see thoroughly organized a system by which the learning of

our universities could be made available for our lay-readers and Sunday School teachers through means of summer sessions at Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Dublin, and King's College. Many of our laity, and not a few of our clergy, would gladly give a part or the whole of their holidays to visiting Oxford or Cambridge if they could but hear our best teachers on Christian evidences. And it ought not to be hard to arrange, in the large non-university towns, series of evening *teaching* lectures by eminent men. Such lectures might well be prefaced by afternoon conferences of the clergy, who would endeavour to learn what they could from the special learning or peculiar experience of the lecturer. Of course, it would be well if greater attention were given at the universities and theological colleges to the more important aspects of the subject; but I refer, at present, to the value of such conferences in helping the clergy after, it may be long after, their training for orders has come to a close.

Then, why should there not be in every diocese a small committee, whose business it should be to watch with great care the tendencies of the times, to take note of the evidential needs of the diocese, and provide what help the clergy might need in dealing with the organized unbelief of their parishes. A like committee might very well be appointed for every considerable town, several parishes being grouped for evidential purposes. All that is necessary is to thoroughly organize the means we possess.

3. *Some Needed Books.*—You lay great stress on knowledge of the method of science. Would you mind naming the books you think most necessary?

Familiarity with almost any such work as Jevons' "Elementary Logic" in the chapters which treat of Induction, Deduction, and the like, would put any young



man on the right track. Afterwards, he could hardly do better than take up Jevons' "Principles of Science" and compare it with Hamilton, Mill, and the second volume of Spencer's "Psychology." But I must add that some books are greatly needed which have not yet, as far as I know, made their appearance.

If some third-rate or fourth-rate man would only give the clerical public what I will venture to call a *Scientific Manual of Biblical Criticism*, many thousands would thank him heartily, and buy his book. First-rate and even second-rate intellects would not do. The temptation to put in some "original work," the desire to express "my own view," would be too strong for them. Neither would sixth-rate or even fifth-rate thinkers do. The sense of proportion, of relative importance, would be too weak; they would scarcely know what *is* and what is *not* criticism. But surely there must be somewhere a man who in brains falls short of second-class thinkers, and is yet endowed with sufficient critical faculty to recognize criticism when he sees it, sufficient industry to collect the necessary material, sufficient science to put the material in scientific order, and sufficient honesty to give impartially—that is without the slightest reference to the use that may be made thereof—the Principles of Criticism on which (1) the critics actually proceed, and (2) those on which, from a scientific point of view, they ought to proceed. As far as I have seen, no such book exists. What a splendid opportunity of doing good service! I venture to predict that the author who will do this much-needed work well will win for himself an enduring place in the hearts of thousands of perplexed readers.

When will some great scholar write *Christian Evidences for Children*, or, at least, *The Story of the Bible*? You

know how well Niebuhr rendered classical fables in simple German for the use of his own children. I want something as good done in English with the story of the Bible. Let a scholar of the highest rank say to himself, "In what manner would I like the tale told to my own boys and girls? How would I have them made familiar with all the facts just as they are?—the facts of history, the translation, the text, the mistakes in details, the moral errors, the religious defects, so far as these last are *not* imaginary? How am I to make them feel that a parable, or even what is called a myth, may be in the highest sense a true story? How are they to be taught that the Bible gives more of the mind of God, not less, in that its writers gave much more heed to the Spirit that enlightened them than to the make of the lamps in which they gave that light to others?" Let him answer these questions to his own head and heart and soul of truth, and then write the story as for his own children. I hope my experience is exceptional, but, as a matter of fact, I do not know a single lesson-book on the Bible for children that does not contain some things of doubtful accuracy, some, I think, not true, and a great many that will be stumbling-blocks in later life to all of them who think. Scholars do not like writing for children! No? Then scholars are in a dangerous state. Do they forget what Jesus said about despising the little ones?

Another opportunity! There is great need of an absolutely honest *Handbook of Christian Evidence*, written by a man who perfectly understands the laws of evidence, and is prepared to face fearlessly whatever results the impartial application of the scientific method, so far as it really applies, may produce. And still another! No one has yet written a really trustworthy *Manual of Philosophy*

in its Bearings on Christian Evidence and Biblical Criticism. Three other books much needed. 1. *An Alphabetical Index to all Contemporary Objections to Christianity, with Short Replies, and References to the Books* (chapters and page) *where Fuller Answers may be Found*. Any competent man, having access to a good library, and working only two hours a day, might have this work ready for publication in ten years. 2. *A Short but Clear Account of all the Non-Christian Systems, as far as they Affect Belief and Unbelief in Christ, Current in the Nineteenth Century*. Such a work, if well done, would be very useful, and need not take more than a couple of years. 3. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Christian Evidence Works*, giving in each case its *raison d'être*, the date of its first publication, its last edition, and price. Speaking broadly, the great intellectual need of our times, probably on all subjects, certainly in theology, is *Conscience*. If a man makes out what professes to be a balance-sheet, and therein shows only, or mainly, one side, he can, of course, make the balance appear what he likes. All such books, therefore, to really meet the needs of our time must show on every page that the author's intellectual conscience has not slept for a moment.

4. *What is the Aim of Evidential Work?*—I entirely agree with you in that. As, however, I have had very little practical experience in evidential work, will you first of all state what, from your point of view, is its object?

About this, so far as words go, there is among believers no difference of opinion. In the living Church we have the universal society of Jesus; in the Bible, the Word of God. In the Old Testament we have two great and continuous Divine facts, the preparatory revelation of God,

and the progressive training of a peculiar people for a special end. In the New Testament we are in the presence, first, of the manifestation of the Son, and, therefore, of the Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ; and, next, of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the creation and development of the Catholic Church as the fulness of Him in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The object of evidential labour must be one with the object of all our work; that is, to induce men to remain in, or enter into, "vital relation with the Redeemer of the world," and, therefore, with His Church. I cannot, however, deny that there are still many Christians who fail to remember this. You will find some examples in my "Problems," which I need not repeat. One great difficulty is to prevent believers regarding all sceptics as opponents to be pulverized. Let me give you a quotation from my little work on the "Unreasonableness of Unbelief." It is from the chapter entitled "The Right Treatment of Sceptics." "I do not write for those who regard unbelievers as men whose dishonesty is to be exultingly exposed, or whose objections are to be contemptuously ignored; men, in short, who are to be 'put down' on every possible occasion. I take it for granted that our aim is not so much to answer objections as it is to save the objectors. And, therefore, the first thing is to keep steadily in view the object of winning the sceptic to Christ. It is not enough to prove objections ill-founded; we must also understand how and why they arose, and deal with them from the point of view of a physician rather than that of a physiologist. Both are interested in the science of the human body; the former is interested also, and chiefly, in the art of saving the body from disease. The abstract theologian is interested in scepticism



only as it affects the truth; the practical theologian is also interested in scepticism as it affects the sceptic. It is very important to remember this distinction,—I mean between objections considered as errors, and objections considered as difficulties. It is certain that the reasons given for scepticism are often, to all appearance, not only inadequate, but absurd. But then, a thing that is very weak as a reason may be very powerful as a cause. At the close of one of my lectures in the North a man rose, and for ten minutes spoke with great earnestness and passion against what he supposed to be Christianity. In replying, I dealt with him gently, taking but little notice of the heat of his language, and pointing out kindly the mistakes he had made. A short time after I received from him a long and most interesting letter, in which occurred the following remarkable sentence: ‘If I had always been treated by Christians as I was treated by you I should never have been a sceptic.’ Now it is easy to show that, considered as a reason, this has no logical force; but considered as a cause no one who has any experience of human nature can doubt its weight. Objections ought to be treated rather as difficulties to be removed than as errors to be exposed. In short, we ought never to be content until the sceptics whom we seek to win have returned ‘to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.’”

5. *The Character of Sceptics.*—There is one thing I want particularly to ask you about. How is it that one finds good men among unbelievers?

I should like to know first what you mean by a good man, and next what kind of unbeliever. Perhaps, however, if you could answer that, your question would be unnecessary. One is tempted to think sometimes that,



in our rebound from former harshness, we are in some danger of going to the other extreme. As once we refused to believe in the goodness that nevertheless existed, so now we are disposed to attribute goodness where it does not exist. It is the less unamiable fault of the two. But is there not another peril? Are we not in some danger of being unjust to God? Is it fair to Him to leave devotion to His service out of our estimate of goodness?

But, then, you cannot blame for that the man who does not believe in God?

Pardon me, I am not speaking of *his* estimate of goodness, but of ours. I do not see why a man should call himself honest if he does not try his best to pay his debts to God.

But how can he, if he does not believe?

The claim which one man has upon another does not in the least depend upon the other's belief in his existence. If anything is owing to the first, it is equally owing whether the debtor believe in his existence or not.

6. *Moral Attitude of the Agnostic.*—I am beginning to see, but surely it makes some difference whether a man believes or not?

Not as to the debt. Unquestionably, unbelief arising from "difficulty," is a different thing from unbelief arising from "depravity;" but that does not alter the fact that every man is a debtor to God.

I am afraid I have wandered into the wrong way of looking at the subject. It seems to me now as if I had practically regarded an atheist as a man who had no duties to God until he had learned to believe in God. What you say is that he owes those duties to God, whether he believes or not?

Yes; and now to follow this out, you will see, also,

that you must show in your whole tone and manner towards atheists, and no less towards agnostics, for the same thing applies to them, that you look upon them as men who neglect their duties towards God. Remember God is not an abstraction without practical interest; He is a living Being Whom it is possible to wrong, and Whom every man does wrong who neglects his duties to Him.

Stop a moment. You hit me there, and hit me hard.

Do you suppose I do not hit myself, also, and harder still? But that cannot alter the fact. Atheists and agnostics are men who do not perform their duties towards God.

And yet many of them put many of us to shame by the way they perform their duties towards men.

Granted, but in so far as each of these is really a good man, not simply an organism richly endowed with qualities every one holds to be admirable, not simply a "moral" automaton, the time will certainly come when it will be an acute pain to him to discover that he has neglected his duties towards God.

7. *Honest and Dishonest Unbelief*.—But surely the guilt of an honest unbeliever is less?

Less than what? Less than that of a "dishonest unbeliever?" Are there dishonest unbelievers? What does the phrase imply? That a man can dishonestly unbelieve? That is too subtle a question, if it is not a conjunction of contradictory terms.

Less guilty than the man who believes and yet neglects his duties.

That is also a difficult matter. It is, at least, doubtful how far a man is really a believer if he neglect his duties towards God.

Still, there must be a difference in the degree of guilt.

It is better to leave the judgment of the degree of guilt to Him Who is alone capable of taking all the facts into account. How far, in any case, moral evil is disease, how far it is sin, is beyond our powers to determine, but that in every case there is some sin, we are sure.

8. *Christian View of the Unbeliever.*—But I cannot help feeling that it is right to treat unbelievers differently from other men.

Not as regards the fact that they neglect their duties towards God. It is perilous in the extreme to their highest interests to treat them otherwise. Your own knowledge of human nature will tell you that a man will regard the same course of conduct in totally different lights, according as he thinks it may or it may not involve wrong to others. The very perception on the atheist's or agnostic's part that his atheism or agnosticism may possibly involve wrong to God, puts the whole subject in a different category (bringing it within the sphere of the moral and the practical), from that which it occupies so long as he looks upon the Divine existence as a speculative question only.

You would, I infer, say the same thing with respect to his duties towards Christ?

Assuredly. What is *owing* to God manifest in the flesh, does not depend on our belief in His existence.

But surely knowledge brings its own responsibility. Is not the man who knows his duties more responsible than the man who does not?

No doubt. Yet I might urge that that way of putting it is a little perilous, for it might encourage men to remain ignorant, lest, as their ignorance decreased, their responsibility should grow. But what I desire to emphasize is that the sceptic, in common with all other men,

exists in certain relations to Christ, and that his ignorance or unbelief cannot affect the existence of these relations; and also that out of these relations grow certain duties to Jesus Christ, duties which are still a debt owing, whether the debtor believes in Jesus Christ or not.

You would say, then, that the unbeliever is under obligation to believe?

Certainly; but that is only one point in what I mean. Jesus Christ has partly revealed, partly, also, created, the relations in which we stand to Him and God. His revelation of the Divine Fatherhood, of His own Divine Sonship, and of the actual sonship of man in Him, make worship, reverence, love, trust, obedience *due* to Him; and this dueness cannot be affected by any ignorance or unbelief on our part.

You would say, as before, that you decline to judge any man's guilt, but simply say that there are certain duties to Jesus Christ which the sceptic does not perform?

Yes; and in the measure in which he is really a good man, he will be profoundly sorry one day that he had not so much as tried to do his duty by Christ. If we only make the sceptic feel that it is possible his conduct may wrong the Living Christ, the question will, as before, be moved into the practical sphere, and take a wholly different complexion. So long as it remains simply a problem of ancient history, it will have little effect on life. But if a man should say to himself, It is, at least, *possible* that I may be going right against the will of God the Saviour, he will, if he is a good man, at least hesitate before he throws his whole influence into the scale of unbelief.

And you would, I infer, say much the same thing as to the relations which Christ has established between man and man, between the Church and the world?

I would ; for what Christ reveals and creates of duty from man to man remains due whether there be belief in Christ or not. We have given, I am afraid, too much excuse for treating the question as of historic interest only. Still, faults on our side do not justify faults on the other. To love his neighbour as himself is an obligation which no man can abolish by becoming an unbeliever or by anything else. And the man must have strange ideas of morality who thinks himself true to that obligation while he teaches others not to believe in Christ. As a matter of fact, I greatly doubt whether sceptics generally have realized this aspect of the subject at all. I would strongly urge the clergy to treat every atheist, agnostic, and sceptic in such a way as will most tend to make him feel that his unbelief is not simply a negative attitude towards certain propositions, but, also, a terrible neglect of the most serious duties, and thus constitutes a tremendous wrong to man, to Christ, and to God.

There is one more consideration. It is to me infinitely sad to see how the noblest sceptics *waste* their energies in vain attacks on the Church. Their highest efforts are rendered comparatively futile by the perceived fact that they have nothing a fiftieth part so good to offer instead of that they seek to take away, and that, in truth, the whole tendency of their attempts is to destroy, not improve. To those who are truly doubters, not deniers, I would say : My brothers, be not in a hurry to leave the Church. It is there your doubts are most likely to be met. If Thomas had gone out and founded a society of sceptics, I suppose he would scarcely have seen Christ again. But though he doubted, he did not leave the Church, and Christ came to him there, and there gave him, in pity, the evidence he ought not to have needed. Stay in the Church.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE CAUSES OF UNBELIEF.

1. *Introduction.*—I see clearly that the end in view is really that of all preaching. The next thing, I suppose, is to trace the causes of unbelief. But there is one point, to begin with, about which I want more light. In all ordinary sermons we take it for granted that sin is the cause of separation from God; are we to assume the same thing in our treatment of unbelievers?

Unquestionably. But there is need of great care in distinguishing sin as universal disablement of faculty from sin as voluntary neglect of duty or violation of law. We are certainly not entitled to take it for granted that all unbelief is the result of sin in the second sense.

2. *Motives of Unbelievers.*—But you will admit that a man may have become a sceptic from evil motives?

Yes, I admit that. For I know that if a man is living a bad life, it is impossible to retain a good faith. It would clear the ground if we could only get every one to see that a bad man, whatever his opinion as to the historical facts of Christianity, is necessarily an unbeliever in Jesus Christ. He that doeth evil cometh not to the light. Therefore, before a man of this character can become or re-become a Christian in any ethical sense, he must have, at least, an awakened consciousness of sin, and a desire to repent.

From this point, repentance and belief go together, changing the man from badness to goodness.

But you do not think that all unbelievers are bad men ?

Only in the sense that all *men*, not yet in vital relation with Christ, are bad. In that sense, which is not, however, the usual one, the statement is true. I do not myself question the universality of sin, and its power of unconsciously affecting the judgments we form. I believe that were there no sin there would be no unbelief in God and Christ ; and, were it not for the same evil influence, the belief of Christians would be much deeper, stronger, and more energetic than it is. But using the word in its ordinary sense, I cannot, for a moment, admit the truth of the statement. All bad men are unbelievers, but it does not follow that all unbelievers are bad men, save in the sense described.

It is, then, a question of numbers. You admit that some, but not all, unbelievers belong to this class ?

Yes, that is so. As to the proportion of the "some" to the remainder, I have no means of judging. I know that badness must produce unbelief, but the worst unbelievers are those who pretend to be Christians. Those who openly profess to be what they are, are, at all events, a shade less bad.

3. *The Real Causes of Unbelief.*—But now as to those who are not, in the ordinary sense, bad men, how do you suppose their unbelief to be produced ?

Perhaps unbelief is too harsh a word to be used in their case. I have never met a manifestly good man who was a *disbeliever* in God and Christ ; but I have met those who were non-believers, doubters, or agnostics. The causes of this suspense of belief are, in one point of view, numerous, and would require a volume for their adequate statement.

but, in another, they are all reducible to one. Omitting the numerous cases marked by absence of interest in good as good, I think the most pronounced cause of suspense of belief is the apparent insufficiency of the evidence that Christianity is true to our own experience of facts. And this in several particulars, of which the following may be taken as a sample.

4. *God not found.*—I have sought God, says the sceptic, and have not found Him. I have spoken to Him, believing that if He is, He hears; and no responsive voice, that I could recognize as His, has come. Communion with God, the most glorious and beautiful of things, were it possible, is therefore altogether out of my experience. I do not say that it is out of the experience of others; only that it is out of my own. I do not deny Christianity for others; I am simply stating facts about myself. I have no consciousness of God in personal relation with me. As to whether others have, I neither believe nor disbelieve. I have no adequate data to go upon. If their alleged experience inclines me to believe, my own actual experience inclines me to disbelieve; and the resultant of the two forces is simple absence of belief and of disbelief. I have prayed to Him, but no event that bore marks of being an answer has ever, as far as I know, occurred. It is, of course, impossible to say absolutely there has been nothing done in response to prayer that would not have been equally done had I not prayed at all; but no answer has ever come to me bearing on its breast the Divine certificate of its source. So far, then, as communion with God and answers to prayer are concerned, I have not been able to verify, in my own experience, these doctrines of Christianity. But if I cannot verify these, I can verify none. Repentance, faith, forgiveness, spiritual guidance,

growth in grace, inner blessedness, ultimate glory stand but for dreams if I can have no conscious communion with God and no recognizable answers to prayer. Repentance, indeed, as perpetual change of the will from all discovered evil towards all discovered good, and faith in the authority of truth and right as eternal ultimates, and as the continually ascending ideal of universal progress, belong to me as a man, and of these I cannot be deprived except by the baseness of voluntary surrender. But whether these are related to God, and in what manner, I know not. I have no experience of spiritual guidance, or growth in grace, or inner blessedness, or hope of glory other than is implied in, or results from, fidelity to my conscience and obedience to law. I regard, with an admiration scarcely less intense and reverent than your own, the beauty of the character and life of Jesus, and I admit the possible truth of His teaching in relation to God and man. I do not deny the attractiveness of His Christianity, save as regards His view of eternal punishment, though this may be a misinterpretation on my part, or a misreport on the part of the evangelist. I will not dispute your theories of inspiration or challenge the authority of the Church. I simply say these things are not verified, or, apparently verifiable, in my own experience. A God Who cares enough for me to speak to me—to make Himself known to me—to love me in such a way that I shall have, at least, as direct consciousness of His love, as I have of the affection of my dearest friend, is apparently the God of Christ; but He is not the God of my experience, and what experience does not justify, I will not affirm. I care nothing for the arguments for or against miracles; for neither with them nor without them can I account for Christ. I simply say Christianity is not real to me.

5. *Inequalities of Circumstances.*—That will bear a good deal of thinking about. I suppose one of the chief difficulties is that arising from what is called inequalities of Providence?

Assuredly. It is, I think, a great defect in our national education that our boys are not instructed at school in the elements of Christian English citizenship. One of the great needs of the wage-earning class is a rational *interest* in something more than their work. They have political power, and, without reference to party politics, ought to have some idea of what constitutional government means. They ought to be enabled to learn, before the time comes to take sides, that upon their votes the character and progress of their country will largely depend. Even at from ten to twelve years, a lad can very well be taught that one day he will be called upon to take his part in deciding what laws are to be passed, and what policy it is best to pursue. He is sensitive enough, at that age, to respond to the idea of greatness, and moral enough to feel, if it is put to him in simple language, that power and responsibility go together. Then, his interest in matters local should be thoroughly aroused. He should be taught how much, health, and comfort, and even morals, depend on draining, lighting, ventilation, sanitary dwellings and the like. He might have developed in him the keenest desire for the well-being of the *community*, and look forward to the time when he will set up housekeeping as the period at which he will enter into the full and responsible life of a citizen of a great country. All this would tend to make attractive the principle of thrift, inasmuch as it would invest it with a grace and charm, as an example promoting the welfare of others, which the mere appeal to selfishness could never



do. As things are, when a young man begins to think about such matters, never having been accustomed to associate them with early teaching, and seeing that, in most people's view, they have no connection with religious duties, he is in a position of considerable danger. The thinking on social and political subjects is good in itself, but not having been used to connect these subjects in any way with God and Christ, he is very liable to be led astray by secularists, and, though I hope not so far, by socialists. When he, being outside the range, as he thinks, of ecclesiastical interest, begins to moralize on the state of society, the inequalities in human destiny strike him as inconsistent with the idea of Divine goodness, and he, sooner or later, not unnaturally, comes to the conclusion that it is better to withhold belief in God altogether than to believe in One not manifestly good. At last, he learns to think of the existence of God as a mere speculation, without practical bearing on the concerns of life. He is far better than the merely indifferent whose existence is scarcely distinguishable from that of animals, for he *thinks*, and really tries to do some good in matters secular, social, and political. If he has been religious enough to pray, and has not, as in the case first mentioned, seen that any answer to his prayer has come, especially if he has been unable to obtain work, or if his work is very badly paid, he asks himself, What is the good of religion? Should he have married, and sees wife or child become daily feebler from lack of right nourishment and change of air and scene, which he has not the means to obtain, he puts the question to his heart: If I were in the place of God would I, or would I not, refuse the help prayed for? He answers he would not. He comes then, sadly or bitterly, to the conclusion that, in the practical



affairs of life, God is not to be taken into account. The temptation to believe the same thing is one against which many of the poorer clergy, those who have small livings, possibly, large families, and no private resources, have almost daily to fight. They, at least, should have no difficulty in sympathizing with doubt that comes in this way. Sometimes, however, perhaps generally, doubters have more faith than they themselves think, and if, now and again, their tortured hearts blaspheme, surely the patient pity of God will find excuse for them.

6. *A Case in Point.*—I happened once to say this in a lecture. A long time after, a working man of about thirty-eight years of age called at my house, and asked to see me. He said, "I don't live in your parish, and you don't know me, but I know you. I have come some miles to see you. I heard you lecture once, and it was the turning-point of my life. I prayed God, when my wife lay dying, to give her back to me, and I did not give up hope till she became still and cold. When, at last, I knew she was dead—she was a Christian and passed away in peace—a great passion of grief and rage rose up in my heart. I could not swear beside her, but I went into another room and I cursed God without ceasing until I was fairly spent. From the moment I knew she was dead, I flung religion to the winds, and was, or thought myself, an atheist, until I heard you lecture. I don't know why I went, or what your lecture was about; but one sentence gripped me and held me fast. It was what you said about there being a good deal of real faith running through a doubt that had power to excite men to frenzy, and that the patient pity of God would find excuses for such men. Then I knew I was not an atheist, for to curse God I must believe that He is. Well, I

thought and thought about that; I couldn't get away from it. I said to myself, if my lass could only talk to me what would she say about it? Somehow, it seemed to me as if all at once I knew what was in her mind; as if somehow she made me know it. And it was that she was happy, but was waiting for me. She was sure it was better for both of us that she was taken when she was. I understand nothing about it, but I seemed suddenly to see God was good, and I threw myself down, again in a passion of grief and rage, only this time the rage was against myself and the grief was that I had doubted God. Since then I have tried to live worthy of God as I then saw Him and see Him still, and nothing disturbs my peace now. I have waited long before telling you, but I have come at last to say it." We cannot take this as more than a type of one class, but it serves to illustrate a part of what I have said. I would like the clergy to note this, most of the atheists I have known were once praying men. The prayerless are rarely atheists. They do not care enough about God to doubt Him.

7. *Indignation of Sceptics.*—My dear fellow, all this is very startling! I have met sceptics like the second, not like the first. Those whom I know are not at all of that type.

Pardon me, I am sure you have met many sceptics of this kind, but you met them in a state of indignation which is no more favourable to showing their best side than it would be in our own case. Can you wonder at the indignation, when even so broad-minded a prelate as Archbishop Tait could get no further than the admission, "There are exceptions of minds peculiarly formed" (abnormal creations, I suppose, mental monsters); and, as if even that had to be toned down, immediately added, "but, as a general rule, I have no fear of a man

becoming sceptical, if he has not a secret love of the independence of scepticism and a sort of self-sufficient appreciation of the supposed superiority to the prejudices of ordinary mortals which an enlightened scepticism seems to imply"?<sup>1</sup> But, if you could manage to win the confidence of the sceptic, and encourage him to pour out his heart to you, you would find that this absence of verification in experience is the real cause of his scepticism. Until you are able to recognize this as true, you will never do much good with him. But if you are able to perceive the real cause of suspense of belief, you will gradually see your way to meet it, so far as *man can* meet it at all. You must start, not from a foreign or exterior, but from the sceptic's own standpoint. You must, in a word, *help him to interpret truly his own experience.*

8. *An Illustrative Anecdote.*—Let me add an incident from one of my experiences. I was taking a mission in a midland town. The weather was anything but favourable, yet enough interest was aroused to bring together some hundreds of men in a public hall, including not a few sceptics and doubters. One night many questions had been asked in public, and many more in private, until I was pretty nearly worn out. I at last succeeded in reaching the ante-room, got my overcoat and umbrella, and took my way towards the hospitable home of the rector. I stepped out somewhat quickly, as the night was raw and chill, but, happening to pass a man whose face for some reason appealed to me, I slackened my speed, wondering whether by any chance he might be waiting to speak to me. There was, I confess, a struggle between the wish for shelter and rest, and the desire to do, if

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Archbishop Tait." Third Edition. Vol. i. p. 275.

possible, some good. I turned back, however, and found my friend standing where I had passed him.

"May I venture to ask if you have been at my lecture to-night?"

"Yes, I have."

"Would you like to have some conversation with me?"

"Well, yes, I would."

"In that case would you mind walking on with me, as the night is rather cold?"

My friend and I walked up and down for, I suppose, nearly an hour; during which he told me much of his past history and present trouble. His case was an extraordinary one. This is, in substance, what he said:—

"I have become an atheist from the fear of death; I cannot remember the time when I did not dread to die. For years I prayed to God to take my fear away, but no answer came. When I had become a man, and could think the matter out, I came first to the conclusion that God did not care enough for me to take any notice of my entreaties, and then to the belief that on the whole it was more moral to think there was no God at all than that there was one who did not care. I do not know why I have attended your lectures, nor why I lingered in your path when I saw you coming; but now that you have spoken to me, and won my story from me, I confess it has been some relief to open my heart."

I said to him, "My friend, let us put aside for the moment the question of the Divine existence. Whether or no you are an unbeliever in God, you are not, as I gather from what you have told me, an unbeliever in right, good, or what we call duty."

He exclaimed fervently, and altogether forgetting that

he was an "atheist," "God forbid!" As he seemed himself quite unconscious of any inconsistency, and not in the least desiring any argumentative triumph, I took no notice of the remark, but went on as follows:—

"You would not say, 'I will be honest if honesty pays, or just if justice brings me comfort, or truthful if I find truth more profitable than lying.'"

"No, I would not. I were no *man* could I speak thus!"

"You would not say, 'O duty, I will serve thee and live for thee if thou wilt take all sorrow out of my life.'"

"No, no! There can be no bargaining with duty."

"But, my brother, substitute for the word 'duty,' the word 'God.' Have you not unconsciously been bargaining with Him? Have you not in effect been saying, 'O God, if Thou wilt deliver me from the fear of death, I will be Thy servant,' whereas you ought to have said, 'I will be Thy servant, come what may'?"

He exclaimed, "Stop, stop, I see it all!"

His atheism seemed to have fled instantly and utterly, and raising eyes that were full of tears, he said, "Father, I yield." There came into his face a "light that never shone on sea or shore," and I saw that the fear of death had passed.

Of course I knew that perfect resignation to, or rather perfect acquiescence in, the will of God would take away fear of every kind; but I could not tell him this beforehand without running the risk of appealing to a selfishness that would have spoiled all. The fear could not pass unless and until he became willing to bear the fear.



## CHAPTER III.

### EVIDENTIAL AGENCIES.

1. *Introduction.*—I want to learn all I can about Evidential Missions. How do you conduct them?

Let me answer by giving you an account of one of my experiences at a meeting of clergy.

Host: "I have asked several men to meet you, that we may learn your views as to the best way of conducting the mission. We do not wish you to follow any particular order. Tell us what you think worth telling in any order you like, but you will not mind being interrupted by questions on any points that happen to strike us?"

"That depends on where the question comes in (smiling). I should not like to be interrupted in the middle of a sentence, for example. Questions often lead one *off* the track, instead of helping one to move faster on the track. But as I am here for the purpose of answering questions, it would be better for you to begin."

2. *An Initial Difficulty.*—"Very well. We will begin, and you shall be interrupted as little as possible. The questions must be at first rather tentative. Tell us generally the order in which you think the subject ought to be treated."

"With pleasure. The order is: (1) Object. (2) Means and Method. As to object, the great difficulty is to get the clergy to agree as to what they want. Nominally, it

is easy enough. It is the confirmation of Christians and the conversion of unbelievers. But the trouble comes when you ask, Confirmation in what? Conversion to what? If the missionary is 'Low,' there is at least the possibility that High and Broad Churchmen will regard him with suspicion; if he is 'High,' Low and Broad may find themselves united; for once—the unity of a common dislike; if he is 'Broad,' High and Low may rush into each other's arms crying, 'He will betray the Faith;' if he is neither High nor Low nor Broad, they may all agree in having nothing to do with him." (Laughter.)

Mr. A. "Well, that does not hold good in your case. I know you have taken missions for men of all schools; and in more than one town you have united men of all parties. How do you explain that?"

"Oh, do not make it a personal matter. I am only one, and scarcely reckon. There ought to be hundreds of evidential missionaries. Perhaps it is because I am high, low, and broad at the same time; perhaps it is because no one knows precisely—not even myself—what I am; perhaps it is because of the generous confidence of the clergy who, you know, are, until their suspicions are aroused, a very confiding body of men." (Smiles.)

3. *First Object.*—Mr. B. "Tell us what, in your view, ought to be the object of an evidential mission as far as Christians are concerned."

I answer instantly, "The right direction and increasing energy of the will. No one can tell, except by personal experience, how much the energy of faith is increased by energy of resolve. Each acts and reacts on the other. I take it that the evidential missionary, as such, has nothing to do with the division into parties or schools. His aim is to induce Christians to put forth their whole power of

believing in Christ. In removing difficulties, this must be his sole object. In exhibiting the marvellous beauty and powers of Christianity, his one aim must be to bring the Christian nearer and nearer and yet nearer to Christ. He leaves the specialities of doctrine and ritual which distinguish parties to the parochial clergy, and to the natural development of an instructed Churchmanship. What concerns him is the awakening of the sense of responsibility for right direction and increasing energy of the *will*, not only as regards fidelity but also as regards thoroughness of service."

4. *Second Object.*—Mr. C. "What must be the object of the missionary with respect to the unbeliever?"

I answer at once, "*Energetic choice of, and direction of self in obedience to, Christ.* Bear with me, my brethren, while I explain and defend my position here. No evidential missionary ought to require from any sceptic, as a condition of his beginning the Christian life, the acceptance of any elaborate system of theology. All Churchmen—high, low, or broad—are of course, except by unconscious error, absolutely loyal to the Catholic Faith, and you will not, therefore, think that I would for an instant pare away, from *any* motive, the faith once for all delivered to the saints—that is, to the Church. It is ours to teach, apply, and live; it is not ours to limit, change, neglect, or ignore." ("Hear, hear.") "But you must admit that no human intelligence can take in the whole Catholic Faith in an instant. It requires some culture to grasp it intelligently; it requires a good deal to understand it wholly. It reached its present complete state only through centuries of thought, and to ask any man to at once accept it all, explicitly, as it stands in our creeds and formularies, is not right, for you ask what it is impossible to grant. A

man may, indeed, say that he accepts it, but if he does this without knowing what he professes to accept, does he in fact accept it at all?"

Mr. D. "But surely you would not leave it to the supposed converted sceptic to pick and choose! That would never do."

"Patience, my reverend brother. There is something to say for picking and choosing if it be conscientious and motivated by love of truth" . . . (Some, "Hear, hear!" others, "*If, if!*") "My brothers all, do be patient!" (Smiling.) "I have not finished my sentence . . . as it is in Jesus. You would not, for example, object to a man picking and choosing out of all the forms in which Christianity is presented in the world, the pure doctrines of the Anglican branch of the Catholic Church." (Assent, with some hesitation, doubting what might follow.) "But if a man *should* pick and choose the Presbyterian or the Congregational presentation of the faith, however much you may deplore his mistake, you would not say that he was, on that account, outside the pale of salvation!" (Some smile and agree; some agree without the smile; some are guardedly irresponsive, waiting for what was to follow.)

5. *First and Second Steps*.—Mr. E. "We will not dispute that, but I can see you have something more to say on the subject."

"You are right. Let me suppose that the missionary has so overcome the sceptic's difficulties, so gained the assent of his reason and conscience, so won his heart and wakened his soul, that the sceptic turns resolutely to Christ as His Lord and Saviour, what step should be taken next? In many cases the missionary could go no further; the new disciple would have to be left to the parochial clergy. But where he has opportunity, the

missioner might well point out to him the extreme improbability of his individual interpretation of Christ being more correct than that of the Catholic Church; and the consequent duty of gradually learning and patiently accepting that interpretation. I should endeavour to convince him that Christ had really given authority to His Church, and that he was infinitely more likely to be right in following the teaching of the Church than in following his private judgment. But if I failed in this, much as I should regret it, I should not dream of saying he was not a Christian. Believing that no such change as I have described could take place except by the power of the Holy Ghost, believing that wherever the Holy Spirit comes, the Catholic Faith comes also, I should regard the new disciple as an implicit Catholic and pray for him as one in whom Catholicism would, in God's good time, become explicit." (General assent, except that some do not feel quite comfortable about the use of the word *Catholic*, thinking that it had too much of a party flavour.)

6. *Objection to Formal Debates.*—Mr. F. "To come now to what may be called the 'business' of missioning, what means would you employ, what method would you follow?"

"Let me deal first with cases out of the ordinary course. In my younger days, when I was a free lance, I used to debate a good deal, my plea being that, if I succeeded, there was some nett gain; if I lost, well, so much the worse for me, but scarcely for any one else. Free lances, if they have the necessary qualifications, might perhaps do that still with advantage, in many places. But I do not think the clergy anywhere ought to sanction formal debate, *i.e.* debate between a representative chosen by them and one chosen by the other side."



Mr. G. "Why do you object to set debates?"

"I do not say that I object to them always and everywhere. But, as a rule, I think the clergy should not sanction them. As I have said elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> 'I cannot say that I have much faith in their usefulness, except under conditions that are rarely found. I do not think any man ought to engage in them unless there is something in his moral, intellectual, and religious history which gives him a peculiar fitness for that kind of work; nor even then unless he is ready to subject himself to the strain of a very severe discipline of his own mind and heart. For he must have studied with great accuracy both sides of the question with the aim, not of conquering an opponent, but of establishing the truth, and converting the objector. And this must be done by arguments that are rigorously just, wholly uninfluenced by passion, except such emotion as gives the varying moral glow necessary to prove that the speaker proportionately feels and values the truths his lips proclaim.

"No doubt this is necessary also to any high kind of written discussion. But then, the temptation to depart from this acknowledged standard is multiplied tenfold when the debate is oral instead of written. To keep calm when one's audience is excited; to answer without heat arguments that are felt to be unfair; to refrain from retorts that would, indeed, "bring down the house," but are not really to the point; to resolutely recognize whatever there is of relevant truth in an opponent's statements, no matter how objectionably worded; to remember always that no amount of "heresy" avowed or of sin supposed can justify any departure from Christ's law of love; all this—

<sup>1</sup> "Unreasonableness of Unbelief." Church of England Sunday School Institute,

less than this would fall short of what ought to be—demands not only such special capacity and training, but also such incessant watching unto prayer as one but rarely finds. Then one must remember the audience. Numbers will always look on the speakers as gladiators in the arena, and their interest is confined to the victory or defeat of their representatives. I must admit that, as a rule, the atmosphere of public discussion is not favourable to the all-round study of truth.' Rightly or wrongly, however, I considered myself an exception to the rule."

Mr. G. "But as to lectures in halls,—you allow discussion after them?"

"I am not sure that it is a wise thing to do, save under exceptional circumstances. I do not see why the effect of a lecture should be marred by allowing opposition, almost certainly on a point that has nothing to do with the main argument of the lecturer. I am doubtful even whether it is much use allowing questions in public—except, as I have said, under peculiar circumstances. But, everywhere, I would have the missionary give every possible opportunity to inquirers to see him privately, and, what is very important, without the knowledge of the parochial clergy."

7. *Method of Missions.*—Mr. H. "How long ought a mission to last? How many days?"

"As a matter of fact, in my own case, usually two Sundays, with five out of the six intervening days. But I often wish it could last a fortnight, or even a month. As a rule, interest is not thoroughly aroused till my mission is nearly at an end."

Mr. I. "I suppose your week-day addresses are given in church?"

"Sometimes in church, sometimes in hall. My own

preference is for the latter, but the great cost is practically prohibitive."

Mr. J. "Would you state in your own way any other points that seem important."

"Yes, I will do that. One thing that is often mis-managed is the advertising; but how to advise as to the right management is beyond my power. So much depends on local circumstances. But, generally, it would be well to make the approach of the mission known early, and repeat the notices nearer the precise date. You understand as well as I how difficult it is to make a thing thoroughly known unless there be ample time given for people to talk about it, and for expectation to grow. Every bill, large and small, should have printed prominently upon it the earnest request that only those who have themselves some difficulties, or who are desirous to help those who have, should attend the week-night addresses. Nothing can be more disconcerting to an evidential missionary than to find a congregation consisting mainly of devout souls who probably never had a doubt in their lives. Better one hundred of the right sort than a thousand of the wrong. I will suppose that he speaks, besides the two Sundays, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Let him for an hour, after his address, each night, if there be inquirers enough to occupy that time, remain in the vestry for individual guidance and help. On Friday evening let him, if a fit room can be had, give two hours, say, from 7.30 to 9.30, to meeting doubters singly. During the five days, he might give a series of afternoon or morning addresses to ladies, answering for half an hour after, in the vestry, any questions that may be put. It might also be arranged that he could give some dinner-hour addresses at large

works. Then on Saturday let him rest utterly. Of course, his Sunday sermons have been prepared long before; and all he ought to do on the Saturday is to look them over. As to the personal preparation of the missionary himself, you already know my views, and I need say nothing now; but it is of the greatest importance that he and his work should be constantly, and earnestly, and believingly prayed for, *before, during, and after* his mission."

8. *The Conversational Method.*—"I need not ask you about the employment of the press, for that no one questions. For most of us the only available agency, apart from sermons, is conversation. But, I suppose, you would say that the same principles will apply, and practically the same method may be used, in conversation as in lectures and sermons?"

"That is so. I will give you some examples later. But, perhaps, there is greater difficulty in keeping one's temper in private dialogue than in public discussion. Always remember that both you and your opponent are in the presence of God, and, having already trusted the Holy Spirit to guide your preparation, trust Him to guide also your conversation. You will of course be very patient; but see that your patience be bright and sympathetic, while yet profoundly serious; not dully enduring under visible strain. For the rest, do not allow your friend to entrench himself behind an endless stockade of negations. Ask him what he *does* believe, and start from that. Only be faithful to spiritual guidance given you in answer to prayer, and remember that God's love for your friend is greater than yours. Never forget what I have said about helping the sceptic to rightly interpret his *own* experience."

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARGUMENTS IN GENERAL.

1. *Introduction.*—What is the method to be pursued in carrying out the principle?

There is no one method applicable in all circumstances. If, however, we keep constantly in mind that the principle of our work is to help the sceptic to interpret his own experience, and if, at the same time, we trust continuously the Holy Spirit to enable us to apply that principle rightly, we shall make no fatal mistakes. But we must not expect Divine influence to be a *substitute* for preparation. On the contrary, there should be the best preparation possible; only the preparation itself must be in the Holy Spirit.

2. *Argument as a Means.*—That is very important; but now for another point. One hears much for and against—but oftener against—the use of arguments on behalf of Christianity. I am not one of those who speak against them, but I should like to hear your views as to the choice of arguments?

That depends on one's standpoint. I am not able to agree either with those who despise or with those who glorify arguments. No man, of course, can ever be justified in giving his sanction to any reasoning he suspects to be false; but, within the limits of the true, the choice of an instrument must be determined not by its



artistic finish, but by its ascertained power to do the work in hand. I visited one day the warehouses in Paris of a great firm of merchants, whose speciality was the sale of agricultural machinery. One of the heads of the firm said to me, "I want to show you a curiosity. Look at that. I suppose you never saw a worse-finished machine. We got it from the United States, and when we showed it to English and French engineers, they said it could not go for an hour. But it has been going steadily for more than two years, and has done twice the work of any other machine we have. The fact is, the maker applied himself to secure a particular purpose, and did not trouble himself much about anything else; and, for the purpose, ugly and shaky as it looks, it is the best we know." That was a useful illustration for me. Arguments may be beautifully finished, but if they will not serve their purpose, they are not of much value. I do not care so much for the beauty as for the utility of an instrument; though I do not see why we should not have both. But if you are fighting, it is not the loveliest sword to look at you will choose, but the one of the finest temper and keenest edge. If you see a man drowning, you will not wait to carefully select the smoothest rope; you will fling him any one that is strong enough to stand the strain of pulling him ashore.

3. *Working Arguments.*—That is very encouraging. I have often stood aghast at what, to judge from the books, appeared to be indispensable.

There are, indeed, some magnificent arguments that one uses with great joy when one has an audience clear brained enough to follow them. But it is necessary to success to make allowance for the half-fogged condition in which most of us ordinarily live. In thought, as

in life, we can only climb the mountains now and again, and probably, the majority of men have never got higher than a moderate hill; to say nothing of the fact that often, when we have at last gained the summit, the climb, like virtue, has to be its own reward—everything being veiled in mist. It is, therefore, of great importance to have, besides our mountain arguments for clear days, less magnificent but more useful pleas for ordinary occasions. I visited once Mr. Newall's observatory, near Gateshead. I was lost in admiration of his grand telescope with its twenty-five inch object-glass. I said, "May I ask how often you have been able to use this during the last twelve months?" He replied, "I could hardly tell you without looking up my notes; but certainly not ten times. The atmospheric conditions have not been favourable enough." Presently he pointed, if I remember rightly, to a telescope with a four and a half inch object-glass, and quietly remarked, "I have done twenty times the work with that." It is just so with arguments.

4. *Difficulty that Difficulties exist.*—Thank you very much. I want you now to deal with the subject of difficulties. I do not mean how you would treat this or that particular objection. I know where to find stock answers. What I want to learn is your view of what I may call the difficulty of the existence of difficulties?

That is very important. The then Bishop of Manchester (Dr. Fraser) once wrote for me a paragraph in a little circular I was issuing as secretary of a Christian evidence committee (a branch of the Christian Evidence Society of London), in which he laid pre-eminent stress on the fact that difficulties were not peculiar to Christianity. The general impression all sorts and conditions of sceptics seem to have is that, if they can only adduce things hard

to comprehend, they have given reason enough for their non-belief. If they would only apply the same principle to science the results would astonish them. They would see the whole edifice tumbling down, not so much because of defects in the structure, as because the foundations had been undermined. It is essential to the right treatment of unbelievers that we should ourselves well understand the subject. As regards most of them, you might completely answer every objection urged without producing any change of attitude on their part. This fact, if the reason of it is grasped, will explain much that is otherwise inexplicable. Very able and very good men have, from ignorance of the reason, spoken unjustly and harshly of non-believers. The former, finding that the most patient and kindest explanation of difficulties produced hardly any effect on the minds of the latter, came sadly to the conclusion that there was either invincible ignorance and prejudice, or else a real unwillingness to accept the truth. How far this unwillingness exists in any of us, God alone can truly judge. But that its existence is not confined to unbelievers my own heart painfully witnesses. The dominant desire to be "guided into all truth" is not a common feature of contemporary holiness. Some of the best men I know seem to have nailed up one or two of the doors at which truth stands knocking with sad persistence. I cannot, therefore, deny that unwillingness to accept the truth may be a motive for not duly weighing the arguments and explanations offered to unbelievers. But, I do not think that we ought to take that answer as exclusive. Unwillingness may be a cause, but as it is not the only cause, *it* might be removed, and the unbelief still remain. The obstacle is not only in the will, it is also in the standpoint. I grant the latter may sometimes be the

result of the former, but so also may the former be the result of the latter.

5. *The Fundamental Difficulty*.—What is this deepest difficulty and how is it to be overcome?

I would strongly urge you before advancing your battalions against the forces of the enemy, to well survey the field of battle. Nay, if it be a single combat, I would even advise you to let your sceptic smite you hip and thigh if you are able to keep your temper and hold your purpose. Let him exhaust all his arguments, and raise himself, like a Hercules, over his prostrate foe, and then quietly ask him, "My brother, what is your theory of creation?" At first he will be considerably astonished, not seeing the relevancy of your question. But, as soon as he understands your inquiry, he is sure to answer it, and you will learn not only that he has adopted the mechanical theory of the universe, which is true enough within its proper range, but also that he believes in no other. That is the real root of the so-called difficulties. You may lop off branch after branch, you may hew down the trunk till there is only an ugly stump left, and your labour is all wasted. The tree will grow again with the rapidity of a gourd and the strength of an oak. Moreover, it is a theory which, as an expression of one of the modes of Divine operation, cannot be uprooted. It has established its right to exist, and all we have to do with it is to keep it sufficiently pruned to prevent its overshadowing a region which it has no right to invade. Extremists on the one side reduce everything to consciousness, extremists on the other reduce everything to force; it is for us, while recognizing both as manifestations of one God, to insist that consciousness as well as force shall be taken into account and truly interpreted.



6. *How to be overcome.*—But what is one to do? How is this to be met?

With the unbeliever in moral freedom you can make no headway until you can arouse his own moral feeling in resolute revolt against the intrusion of force into that sphere. I think it can be done; not so much by what is called argument as by incessant appeal to his own conscience and to the moral facts which his conscience cannot but recognize; by persistently pointing out, for example, how, when off his guard, he himself constantly uses terms which imply the belief that he argumentatively denies; how the whole literature of history and the drama continually reveals implications of moral freedom as amongst the deepest-rooted convictions of the human mind; how absurd are all his own attacks upon Christianity as a thing unjust (!) and immoral (!) if he will not admit the freedom he disbelieves; and how much more powerful is the argument on its behalf, which consists of the primary and direct testimony of consciousness, than can be any argument against it, which, in the nature of the case, must be, however strong, secondary and indirect. Of course, in the interpretation of consciousness there is more than this. It gives us, in fact, the spiritual philosophy of the universe of which the mechanical philosophy is the lower counterpart. But with most sceptics the argument is best confined to the conscience, and with all it should be chief.

7. *Adaptation of Method.*—You have rendered me real service in pointing out this fundamental distinction of standpoints. Would you kindly indicate the sort of arguments to use in different cases?

There must be adaptation. If you have to deal with a man who knows nothing of the origin of species, or of



natural selection, what is the use, even if your own convictions impose no barrier, of directing your artillery against Darwinism? It seems like firing into "empty air." Or if he whom you want to win does not understand what is meant by the indestructibility of matter, or the persistence of force, why confuse and perplex his thoughts by the introduction of ideas that have no significance for him? Or if the nebular theory—the primæval mist—be to him but as words from a foreign language, why maze his mind by attacks on those, supposing you are not yourself a disciple, who hold the evolution philosophy? Or if he has never heard of Papias, why waste your time in accounting for his silence, real or supposed, as to the fourth Gospel? Or if he is yet untouched by the arguments of Strauss, why enter on the mythical theory? First of all win the man's confidence. Encourage him to "open his heart" to you, and you will be able to judge for yourself what it is that really stands in the way of his wish to believe giving itself effect. There are, of course, unbelievers who have no wish to believe. But the overwhelming majority of men who feel the pressure of difficulties—especially if they are young men—do wish to believe. When I was at Cambridge, out of about one hundred and twenty undergraduates, more or less troubled with doubt, whom I saw privately and singly, only one manifested a hostile spirit. He came with a book of objections and wanted to read a number of them. I said to him, "May I ask if you have mastered those objections and made them your own?" He replied, "Not all of them. Some I do not quite understand, others do not seem to me of much weight, but there remain a good many that appear to me fatal." I answered, "In that case, kindly close the book,

and tell me what objection weighs most with yourself." He thought for a little, and then burst out, "Well, I believe the Christianity I see to be all humbug. Parsons and churches are frauds. They do not believe more than one half they teach, nor do they live the half they do believe." I saw at once that he was speaking from a "sore heart," and instead of being angry at being considered a humbug, I felt deeply sorry for him. I remembered an experience I have narrated elsewhere, and determined to try the experiment with him. I said, "I will not waste time in defending the parsons and the churches. If they have really produced that impression on your mind, nothing I can say, in the short time we have together, is at all likely to modify the impression. But let me ask you this question. Have you never known any one who seemed to you a consistent Christian?" He hesitated. "What," I said, "not one! Father or mother, sister or brother, or a nearer one yet and a dearer one still than all other?" As in the previous case, so in this, his eyes filled with tears, and all his hostility vanished. He was too much moved by the recollection of some one, I know not whom, to continue the conversation. We agreed to meet again the next morning, and in parting he wrung my hand with an energy that made me wince, but convinced me that, at least, he had no dislike of myself. The truth is, it is precisely those unbelievers who feel no difficulties who have no wish to believe.

8. *Attitude towards all Arguments.*—You regard arguments simply as instruments?

Yes, provided the arguments be valid. Every one knows that some men are blind to particular colours, or perhaps deaf to particular notes, and all who think will

grant that it is useless presenting colours they cannot see, or striking notes they cannot hear. So far our course is plain. Let us turn to arguments they *can* appreciate. I look upon even these as *wakeners*. I know, by experience, that the ticking of a watch will rouse one man, though the jangling of the heaviest bell will leave him undisturbed; while in the case of another, nothing short of the screech of a railway engine will dispel his slumbers. And there are men wholly insensitive to sound, who will start up at once if the blind be raised and the light let in. Well, I am ready to tick, or jangle, or screech, or raise the blind, if by any means I can waken a man into the consciousness of God; though, of all the processes, I personally prefer, and find most efficacious, *letting in the light*. You see, then, my position. I care little whether the argument be big or small, rough or smooth, finished or unfinished, if I can only rouse the man. You understand that knowing God is not like mastering a science. Arguments will not make God visible to the soul, any more than "optics" will fill the eyes with light. I take for granted the capacity to see in both cases, and in both cases what is wanted is to get the man to *open his eyes*.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FUNCTION OF EVIDENCE.

1.—*Introduction*.—Will you explain exactly what is meant by cumulative evidence? It cannot mean “all in a heap”—a *cumulus*. The mere massing of evidence is not much good, is it? unless each part has been thoroughly well tested. And I hear it spoken of as a chain; but that seems a dangerous way of putting it, since a chain has but the strength of its *weakest* link. Then I have heard it described as a network, in which, if one or two meshes happen to break, it does not matter much. Though it is better than that of the chain, yet I do not like the idea. One says to one’s self, “That depends on what meshes break.” It is too suggestive, for example, of a net of apples breaking at the bottom and letting all its contents run out. Besides, for my own part, I can form no idea how far my faith and life in God and Christ are affected, one way or the other, by the evidences I have read. I could not, I am certain, pass a satisfactory examination on the subject, and there are some things I believe and do for which, however true and right I feel them to be, I could not give reasons of adequate logical force. In a word, I know I am convinced, but in what way I was convinced I do not know.

2. *Theistic Evidence*.—You will see, as we go on, that it is better to avoid figures like cumulus, chain, and net. They are all misleading, unless carefully used. The first

thing is to get as clear an idea as possible of what we want the evidence to do. I do not know whether you will agree with me, but in my judgment its first function, as regards Theism and Christianity, is not to prove but to interpret; its second is to prove, not interpret; its third is to do both at once. All my own evidential work is based on two fundamental assumptions, *i.e.* that every one is conscious of God, and that every one is conscious of the God-Man.

Stop! for goodness' sake. What *do* you mean? I have had enough to do to follow you when you said you regarded arguments as awakeners of man into consciousness of God; but now you say he *has* the consciousness. It does not then need wakening. And to this you add a wholly new conception. He *has* also the consciousness of the God-Man! I am afraid I have no talent that way; but at all events I do not follow you.

It is not so difficult as you think. The acuteness of your criticism is witness to your power. It is, I will admit, an easy thing to fall into these inconsistencies of expression. I will try, however, to clear up the first point. It *does* seem inaccurate to say that a man has the consciousness of God, and yet has to be awakened into that consciousness. Perhaps you would think it more accurate to speak of "the intuition" of God; perhaps, better, "the implication" of God. Now, contradictory as it may sound, though he is not always conscious of the intuition or implication, it is nevertheless a permanent element of consciousness. The difficulty of precise expression arises from the dual nature of consciousness, of which a luminous hint is given in the familiar phrase, "We not only know, we also know that we know;" to which I may add the statement, "Every man knows more than he



knows that he knows." The one form is usually called consciousness; the other, self-consciousness. I do not altogether like the latter, because of the possible mistaken implication that we are fully conscious of self at any given moment. Take the image of a circular lake and fancy in and around its centre a disc of light. Suppose, further, that there are currents perpetually moving in such a way that while none of them is at any one time wholly in the disc of light, all of them in turn, whether singly or in twos and threes, pass into it at any point and out of it at another, either blending or crossing each other's track. Let us now call the lake self, the disc of light the self-observing consciousness, the currents the observed consciousness, the water itself, to its utmost depth, the mind. The illustration fails in the presumption that the disc of light cannot be attributed to the water, whereas the observing consciousness must be attributed to the mind. But when the defect of an illustration is remembered its danger passes away. Making, then, the necessary allowance, let us proceed. In one sense, all consciousness is self-consciousness; in the sense, that is, that it is self that is conscious. But inasmuch as that of which we are conscious is not always self, a distinction has to be made. You will understand, then, that this distinction is what is called objective; *i.e.* it is based on what it is we are conscious of. There is, therefore, consciousness in general, including all the currents of our being and the forms in which those currents flow, call them what you will; say, for the one, feeling, thought, will; for the other (save as disturbed by sin or disease, whether emotional, intellectual, or volitional), beauty, truth, and right; and there is also the self-observing consciousness by which we know what we are. Otherwise,

a man might, indeed, feel, think, will, but he would never know that he felt, thought, or willed. I note your half-smile and the murmured word "metaphysics." But, my brother, beware how you call an honest man a thief. All this you hold as much as I do. Every religious and moral distinction would disappear if you did not. You exhort men to repentance and to trust. But how are they to set about either, if they can never recognize themselves as repenting or trusting? I see the smile has vanished and the murmur ceased. You admit, then, the distinction.

3. *The Presence of God.*—Now you would have no difficulty in imagining a pure, sweet, still, soft air covering the entire lake, luminous disc and circling currents, and even penetrating far beneath the surface. But we have a better figure than that. There is a something so intangible and fine, that (like space itself, if you admit as true the implied idea of space) it penetrates not only through the mass of the universe, but through every one of all the atoms of which the elements of the universe consist; penetrates, that is, in all directions, not in lines, with untouched spaces between, but everywhere, in every part (if atoms have parts) of every atom; not only penetrates, but permeates, and that in such a sense that there is not in all the space in which float the worlds, or in all the worlds themselves, inside or outside, so much as a mathematical point where it is not. By a bold figure it might be called the all-diffused physical soul of the physical universe. For impalpable and all-diffused as it is, it is still physical; it falls short of pure spirit. Yet æther, for thus this all-present physical something is named, serves better than air as a symbol of spirit. And, I may say in passing, this will explain what you have often heard me

say, that science is continually approaching nearer and nearer the spiritual. Now this æther permeates every molecule of the lake, and of all such lakes, and everything between, yet never in the smallest degree destroys their individuality; nay, it might even be shown that, however unrecognized, their individuality, as well as their existence, depend upon its presence. Now, God, however unrecognized, is as truly present, as is the æther in the universe, in every man, permeating all the depths of his consciousness, all the depths of his being; permeating all men besides, and all things that are, not only without destroying their individuality, but as that Absolute Being on which their individuality and existence alike depend. The object of moral scientific evidence is the recognition of existence as it ought to be; the object of physical scientific evidence is the recognition of existence as it is, on the physical side; the object of spiritual scientific evidence is the recognition of existence as it is, on the spiritual side. But in God, being as it ought to be, and being as it is, are one and the same. And as science is not science in its deepest sense until it recognizes the dependence of all existences upon the Absolute Being, so scientific evidence is not scientific in its deepest sense unless, and so far as, its aim be man's recognition of the all-present God. As God, whether recognized or not, permeates at all points not only existence, but life and consciousness, the atheist or the agnostic, as truly as the theist, lives and moves and has his being in God. The difference is, the theist recognizes God as God; the atheist or agnostic does not. Yet he may, and, I think, always does, recognize Him as the omnipresent Power. What, therefore, the object of our evidence must be is to bring about, on his part, the recognition of God as God; to

make him feel, through every sensitive fibre of his being, that the truth, and right, and beauty, and love which he recognizes as authoritative are revelations of the truth, and right, and beauty, and love of God.

4. *Function of Evidence—Christian.*—I think you ought to rest awhile after that! (After an interval,) Now, please, explain what you mean by the consciousness of the God-Man.

I mean, to put it in the simplest form, that there is a Christ-implanted ideal of the God-Man in every human mind, by comparison with which one is able to recognize the Christ of the Bible and of the Church. And the object of Christian evidence is to enable the unbeliever to recognize that ideal, and to interpret each in the light of the other. When I say an ideal of the God-Man is Christ implanted, I mean that Christ Himself is so present in the depths of the human consciousness that one is able to judge whether the characteristics and deeds of the Christ of the Gospels and the Church are such as can be rightly attributed to the Living Christ he knows. In other words, the Eternal Son of God, in becoming Man and, possibly, before His manifestation in the flesh, became humanly Divine that we might become Divinely human, and, as humanly Divine, inhabits the depths of every human consciousness. "Christ in you" is thus essentially true of every man, though only he who recognizes and obeys Christ can add "the hope of glory."

We have already seen that besides the currents that pass through the luminous disc of self-observation, there are unfathomed depths below. It is a fact known of all men that these depths, where Christ dwells, are not directly, in their contents or their movements, under control; and as they are, under ordinary conditions, in-



scrutable, men cannot recognize, by any self-observation, the presence of Christ therein. But when repentance stirs the consciousness to its depths, when the hunger and thirst after righteousness depresses all lower desires, the Christ within is revealed; and the purified heart discovers that it does see God. We owe to the Christ *without* the recognition of the Christ *within*, and we owe to the Christ within, the interpretation of the Christ without.

5. *Consciousness of Christ.*—It follows from all this, that the presentation of the Gospel story, strongly, clearly, and tenderly told; told with deep insight, intelligent method, and vibrating emotion; told in its manifold relations to actual life, experience, and need; told as on the earth but with heaven always in the field of view, must be, while time endures, the evidence in chief, and in such a sense that all questions of scholarship and testimony are to be regarded not only as subordinate, but as relatively without value, save as they tend to remove difficulties that bar the vision of Christ. Hence all evidential works which fail to do this, are mischievously misnamed. Let no man suppose that when he has given the world a book in which he has triumphantly established the historical truth of the New Testament, answered every scientific objection, annihilated every sceptical theory, he has done more than clear hindrances out of the way which men must take to find the evidence. That evidence is the presentation of Christ Himself. How many evidential missioners there are, I cannot say, but were there thirty thousand of them, their work would be but subsidiary to that of the thirty thousand preachers who are supposed to proclaim the Gospel of Christ every week. But, alas! many of these practically drive away souls whom we have to try to induce to take the way back. When Christ is



rightly presented in the pulpit, there will be less need for us on the platform. I do not say that even were Christ perfectly preached, there would be no need for our lower work. Even then, we should have more than enough to do. But it is the thirty thousand preachers of the Gospel themselves—in so far as they are preachers and not mispreachers—who are the real evidential missionaries. We, for the most part, can do little more than make men willing to listen; it is they who have to tell the story that wakens the consciousness of the ever-present Christ. Would to God they all told it as it deserves to be told! Above all, would to God every one who is named by the name of Christ were indeed a true witness for Him!

6. *Subsidiary Evidence.*—Your answers certainly afford food for thought. I should not like to pay you the poor compliment of saying that I either agree or do not agree with you, before I have time to think out what you have said. As you have seen, I have been taking copious notes. But will you give now your views about what you call “subsidiary evidence”? and will you name twelve English books where it may be found?

Only ignorance itself can deny the magnificent and enduring work that has been done in this field. It would require a book, and no small one, to give even the names with the briefest account of their writings, of English authors alone. I will name three separate dozens from three separate points of view. First List: 1. Sir William Hamilton’s “Metaphysics and Logic.” 2. Herbert Spencer’s “First Principles,” “Psychology,” and “Classification of the Sciences.” 3. Mill’s “Logic.” 4. Jevons’s “Principles of Science.” 5. Grove’s “Correlation of Forces,” with Balfour Stewart’s “Conservation of Energy.”

6. Wallace on "Natural Selection." 7. Stewart and Tait's "Unseen Universe." 8. Max Müller's "Science of Religion." 9. Kennedy's "Natural Theology and Modern Thought," with Sir George Stokes's "Natural Theology." 10. De Pressensé's "Study of Origins." 11. Aubrey Moore's "Science and the Faith," with Temple's "Relations between Religion and Science." 12. "Lux Mundi." If, however, this is too formidable for your purpose, let me advise you to study in the following order. Master Hamilton's Methodology which you will find in his "Logic;" next Spencer's Classification of the Sciences, in his Essays, and next the Principle of the Inconceivability of the Negative, in his "Psychology." These will need reading again and again, and must be thoroughly grasped and constantly *remembered*. When this is done, go through, very carefully, any well-written Introduction to the Study of Science, and mark what the scientific method is, in order that you may judge for yourself how far it is carried out by all other writers you read. After that you will gradually find out for yourself the best books for *you*. But do not, on any account, miss Kennedy's "Natural Theology and Modern Thought," and Aubrey Moore's "Science and the Faith."

Second List: 1. Martineau (*i.e.* in his philosophical works). 2. Fiske's "Cosmic Philosophy." 3. Lotze (English, T. & T. Clark). 4. Flint's "Theism," and "Anti-theistic Theories." 5. Reynolds's "The Supernatural in Nature," etc. 6. Mozley's "Miracles." 7. Huxley's "Hume." 8. Janet's "Final Causes" (T. & T. Clark). 9. McCosh's "Method of the Divine Government," and "Christianity and Positivism." 10. Christlieb. 11. (With reserves) Duke of Argyle's "Reign of Law." 12. Saisset's "Modern Pantheism."

Third List: 1. Butler. 2. Paley. 3. Moorhouse. 4. Lightfoot. 5. Westcott. 6. Salmon. 7. Cave. 8. Milligan. 9. Davison. 10. Maitland. 11. Wace. 12. Row. I would like to add from all three points of view, Herbert Spencer, whom I regard as being, though it may be unconsciously, one of the most powerful evidential writers we have. You will, in any case, give a very prominent position to Liddon and Gore. I attach great value to Prebendary Row's works, though I do not think he appreciates Spencer as he deserves. Dr. Wace is one of the ablest of our writers, but a little too unsympathetic with doubters. Had he lived, there is reason to believe that Aubrey Moore would have been without a rival as regards the relation of the Catholic Church to science. Bishop Temple has given us such a taste of his quality in his work on the relation of religion and science that I cannot but regret he has been unable to do more. One of the most powerful of recent writers on Natural Theology and Modern Thought, is Kennedy of Trinity College, Dublin. I dislike Drummond's acatholicism, but his book on "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" is most serviceable to all who can, with the necessary changes, translate it into a work on spiritual laws in the natural world; but, as every one knows the book, I have not put it in the list. The great German authors you will not allow me to quote except in translation. Most of us, in any case, have to regard them rather as consulting physicians than as regular practitioners. I delight, however, in Herman Lotze, on the theistic side. By the way, do not forget Dale. His work on the Atonement you know; but read, also, his "Living Christ and the Four Gospels." Angus's "Handbook of the Bible" is still valuable. You will not forget, among French writers,

even if you must make his acquaintance through a translation, Pascal, who still stands first in profound suggestiveness. Pressensé is well worth study, and I must say a passing word for Godet. Coming home again, let me mention the last publication of the Christian Evidence Society, Miss March-Phillips's "Cumulative Evidences," as an introduction to more serious study. I would, however, advise any capable young student, who has followed the line of study already named, to start afresh with the New Testament before him, and Salmon and Kennedy on either hand. He will soon discover what more he *must* read. The best English statement of sceptical criticism up to his time, which I know, you will find in Davidson's "Introduction to the Old and New Testaments," and his "Biblical Criticism." Driver, Cheyne, Kirkpatrick and Ryle should be read with Sanday and other "moderates."

7. *The Effect of the Evidence.*—What are the reasons, if the evidence be as strong as you think it is, that there are so many sceptics, or, for that matter, any sceptics at all?

I have partly answered that question already. I have pointed out that there is a sense in which sin is the source as well as the proof of unbelief in Christians as well as in sceptics, but that, in the sense of voluntary and conscious opposition to truth and right, it would be untrue and unjust to bring it forward as the cause of what may be called the higher scepticism. In some cases the supposed weakness of the evidence is alleged as a reason for unbelief by men who are profoundly ignorant of the evidence. Many years ago I had an extraordinary instance of this, one which I remember with special vividness, because it was the only occasion on which I could not immediately find *something* to say in reply to an opponent. At the close of one of my lectures a strikingly handsome



old man rose to speak. I am accustomed to take rapid note of eyes, and lips, and tone. The tone was unexceptionable, the lips were hidden by a heavy moustache, but there was a steely glitter in his eyes. I listened intently. This is what he said. "I do not rise for the purpose of disputing anything the lecturer has said; but simply to give the audience the benefit of my own experience. I have been studying Christian evidences for fifty years, and I am convinced there is nothing in them." He then sat down. Many of my readers would have known what to say. I confess I did not know. I sat perfectly still, thinking hard. The audience waited and wondered. At last, I rose and said, "If my venerable friend has been studying Christian evidences for fifty years, he began a good while before I was born. It becomes me, therefore, and the audience also, to sit at his feet and learn from him. Will he then, on your behalf and my own, allow me to ask him certain questions?" He rose and said in perfect taste, "I will gladly answer any questions I can." Again, I was staggered, not quite knowing how to treat him. But I remembered the steely glitter, and went on: "Thank you. Will you kindly tell us where are the principal manuscripts of the New Testament?" He answered, after a little hesitation, with charming frankness, "I confess I do not know, or I have forgotten." I replied, "I am not surprised at that, for I have met many men who did not know, or had forgotten, notwithstanding that the question belongs to the elements of Christian evidence. You have doubtless given more attention to less elementary parts?" He said, with evident relief, "Yes, that is so." I ran rapidly through a sketch of the "less elementary parts," suggesting that there was really something in them! But this he would not admit, nor would he give



any reason. I had now reached the point I had in view from the moment I rose. "I am sorry I cannot persuade you to give your reasons, but before sitting down, I would like to ask you when you came to the conclusion that there is nothing in Christian evidences?" He answered airily, "Oh, fifty years ago!" The words had scarcely left his lips, when he would have given anything to recall them. But it was too late. "Ah! If you have been studying Christian evidences for fifty years with the foregone conclusion that there was 'nothing' to find, I do not wonder you found nothing." So the incident ended.

But this, though typical of a certain class, cannot be rightly regarded as more than that. Nor does it, even in this class, explain why the evidences are treated with so much indifference. For the explanation of this, I must ask you to recall what I have said about the two stand-points. Naturally, they who, whether learned or unlearned, hold exclusively what is known as the mechanical theory of the universe, reckoning therein all the phenomena of mind and consciousness, look upon Christian evidence as outside the range of their interest. As a rule, men who believe at all in moral freedom, or in any real power of choice and self-direction, have no difficulty in believing in Christ. It is just because they take the fatalistic, necessarian, or determinist view of all that is, that Christianity is not studied. Nevertheless, as they are commonly better than their creeds, it is well, despite their standpoint, to persevere in presenting Christ, assured that many of them will, in the supreme attraction of His moral and spiritual beauty, forget their theory, and act on the power to choose which they really have.

8. *Personal Fitness*.—I have very little time for read-

ing, and, indeed, it is not much I can do directly for sceptics; but however little it is, I want to do it on the right lines. Will you, then, tell me, in the simplest and plainest way, what you think, knowing me as you do, the best course for me to pursue?

Well, you have set me a task more difficult than you imagine. You are, as you call yourself, a plain man, with, I will add, abundance of common sense and good feeling. You have not studied scepticism deeply, but you see that it is not all superficial, and that some of the questions it raises are among the profoundest with which the human mind can grapple. Yet you know, also, that the great majority of sceptics are as little able to solve these problems, or even to understand what they mean, as you say you are yourself, and you desire to have some manageable methods and arguments which, though simple, are true and right. You will grant that to be true and right yourself is indispensable, and you cannot be this, in the sense I mean, without being eminently human. You need, and must have, for this work, the self-reliance that is really trust in God. I hope you follow this clearly. To trust God at random is one way, to trust your own faculties filled with the influence of God, is another way. This is the one I mean. Therefore pray until you become calmly strong. You can do nothing safely without prayer, but you may with great ease pray defectively. It is not enough that you ask, you must ask till you have, God's blessing on your brains, your conscience, and your heart; until you are clear-headed and kindly just; until all self-seeking is gone clean out of you. Then, you will be brightly patient, seriously righteous, resolutely reasonable, divinely human. And you must go on praying and trusting while you are in contact with the sceptic, lest

anything you say should, in substance or manner, be against Christ, though intended to be for Him.

I shall think of that. What next ?

You will remember that you live in two worlds, though the sceptic professes to live in only one.

There now ! You are off into your metaphysics. I cannot follow that.

Oh yes, you can ! You live in God, in the spiritual world as well as the material, while the sceptic thinks that he lives in the material only. Now, as your aim is not to crush him, but to change him, you will, for his sake as well as your own, never desert this standpoint. You have his world as much as he has ; there is, therefore, no need to leave the one he has not, or rather thinks he has not, in order to enter his.

I am afraid I am very dull, but I do not follow you there. Why do you say, "or rather thinks he has not" ? Surely it is a fact that the unbeliever is without God and without hope in the world !

That is, and must be, true to the extent to which he is an unbeliever ; but it is also true that no man's unbelief is absolute. He, as truly as you, as we have seen, lives and moves and has his being in God ; and though God is not in all his thoughts, God is nevertheless in that consciousness which is beneath "thoughts," and which might, at any instant, rise up with startling vividness and power. A man that realizes, were it but for a moment, the authority and *obligatoriness*, the grandeur, beauty, and blessedness of truth, and right, and unselfish love, has in that moment seen God, even while he fails to see that it *is* God he has seen.

But is that really Scriptural ? It seems, somehow, contrary, I will not say to the Bible, but to what I have been accustomed to believe.

I am glad you have put it that way. Many regard the two as the same thing. But all I am doing is to give reality to our belief in the Holy Spirit. You would not dream of thinking of yourself save as His agent. But why should you doubt that the Holy Spirit is in the unbeliever also?

Because he *is* an unbeliever. How can a man have the Holy Spirit unless he pray, and how can he pray unless he believe? The Holy Spirit is promised in answer to prayer. "If ye being evil know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" I quote from memory, but is not that correct?

I do not dispute it; but have you forgotten that the Holy Spirit is not only sought, He also seeks? Do you not remember the promise, "And when He is come He will reprove (convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"? Surely, then, He is in you for moral reasoning, in him for moral conviction! And does not this give you confidence and courage? Believe me, to doubt this is really so far forth to become ourselves unbelievers. My brother, turn that thought out of your mind! *Believe what you believe*; believe it with energy, with power; and let your heart rejoice itself in the Omnipresence of the Holy Spirit.





BOOK II.

UNBELIEF.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE THEORIES OF SCEPTICISM AND SECULARISM.

1. *Introduction.*—One is constantly hearing about “secularism,” but I do not understand it. What is it?

Secularism, in its distinctive sense, is co-extensive with precipitated scepticism, *i.e.* unbelief as definite conviction in contradistinction to scepticism in solution, *i.e.* doubt, as “halting between two opinions.”

2. *Identity of Secularism and Unbelief.*—Wait a moment! Is it really justifiable to treat Secularism as identical with unbelief? And please explain what you mean by “precipitated scepticism.”

Pardon me! I did not say identical, I said co-extensive. Yet the two things are so related that “Secularism” has become hopelessly mixed with definite unbelief. Though you may find a wavering unbelief without “Secularism,” you cannot find “Secularism” without definite unbelief. I will go a step further. It does not, I grant, logically follow that because a man is a definite unbeliever he is also a Secularist in this sense of the word. Yet, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the definite unbeliever and the “Secularist” in the distinctive sense, are one and the same person, as I shall endeavour to show. “Secularism” really is precipitated worldliness, and definite unbelief is sometimes its cause,

sometimes its effect, and generally its excuse. As to precipitated scepticism, a few words will put you in possession of the standpoint which will be afterwards justified. Doubt consists both of belief and of non-belief in solution. The precipitate may be belief, the non-belief evaporating ; or it may be disbelief, the belief evaporating. The latter is what I call precipitated scepticism.

3. *Universal Scepticism*.—But is there not a principle of scepticism, a theory of universal uncertainty ?

Undoubtedly, and, though it is rarely met with now, it must be considered and distinguished from Secularism. The latter says, "Only the secular is practically certain." The former says, "Nothing is certain." Universal scepticism is therefore really a creed, professed or real, consisting of one article—"I believe in nothing." That such a belief is not scientific goes without saying, but inasmuch as its tendency is to discredit the standard to which we appeal—the philosophy and method of science—it may be as well to show that it takes for granted principles which it professes to deny. In its extreme form, as in the cynical demand of the club-lounger—What is truth ?—it may be presented thus :<sup>1</sup> "Nothing is certain ; no faculty of our nature is worthy of trust. Sight, as in the seeming movements of the heavenly bodies around the earth, or as in the contrast between light as seen or as supposed to be seen, and the invisible vibrations of the luminiferous æther of which 'science' so glibly talks, constantly deceives us, and all our other senses are equally deceptive. If we turn to reason we are no better off. In philosophy, no system can be produced that is not neutralized by an

<sup>1</sup> Quoted, with modifications, from the author's "Unreasonableness of Unbelief."

antagonistic system. In science there is an equal absence of ultimate certainty. There is no proof of the universality of laws; the statement is confessedly an assumption; experiments can prove nothing outside of the range of experiments. That gravitation, for example, is everywhere is an unproved doctrine—which may be any day replaced by another equally unproved. Theories, many of which are but fantastic guesses, abound in science, and that without justification. Take evolution. Suppose there are certain facts which apparently support the theory, who does not know that it is extended far beyond the facts? There is much dependence placed upon principles. Whence come they? You erect imaginations of your own into principles, you arrange your phenomena in harmony with these, and you call it the harmony of nature! As to your supposed Ultimate Ideas, how do you know that they are ultimate? Can you prove that there is anything at all corresponding to these ideas? You confess you cannot. Then your whole edifice of science is but a visionary structure resting on a basis of acknowledged ignorance.”

That is strongly stated. How do you answer it?

They who have faith in science may reply as follows: “Whether your assertions be true or false, they all appeal to that very reason against which they are directed, and assume a certainty that is yet said to have no existence. In order to know that we have been deceived by our senses, there must be something that does not deceive us; for otherwise we could not tell whether we had been deceived or not. To be able to affirm that philosophy is valueless, implies the recognition of some standard of value, for otherwise we could not know whether philosophy had any value or not. The perception that what is called



science includes much that is erroneous, assumes the power of distinguishing what is true from what is not true, for otherwise we should be unable to say whether it was erroneous or not. The description of theories as fantastic guesses is a recognition of our ability to pronounce on their character, for otherwise we could not tell whether they were fantastic or not. The objection to arrangement as arbitrary clearly suggests our capacity to know whether it is arbitrary or not. And generally if scepticism of this extreme type has any reasonableness, its attack on reason is condemned out of its own mouth. If therefore, this 'scepticism is to be justified at all, it must be by the use of the scientific faculty.'"

Thus the belief that everything is uncertain turns out to be self-contradictory. Nevertheless, it is easy to mistake the true force of the answer, and exclusive rationalism almost always does this. It ignores the fact that our ultimate certainty is not that of reason, but of faith, except as, in their roots, the two are one. But if reason is to be understood as simply the faculty of proof, and if whatever is not proved is to be rejected, then, indeed, the universal sceptic is more nearly right than he himself supposes. It is not even certain that nothing is certain. But if one is right in saying this, there must be something certain, or he could not be right in saying so. Thus, if we have no assumptions, we are plunged into a sea of contradictions. But assumptions there must be, if anything is to be proved. It is impossible to begin with nothing; and yet, begin with what we may, its existence may be challenged. Though not stated in the argument, the logician evidently assumes that he himself is. But, if challenged, how is he to prove that he is? Existence of some sort must be assumed. "To be known at all it must

be in connection with something, must have relation, with its two elements of likeness and difference. It must be of some sort, else it would be impossible to distinguish it; that is, it must have quality. It must also, unless it be infinite or spirit, have *some* dimensions; that is, it must have quantity. Again, any material being must exist in this or that place, during this or that period; that is, must exist in time and space. Once more, whatever entity exists must be something, whether spirit or matter, or the two in one; must have action or motion, or both; power or force, or both; since action or motion without power or force is inconceivable. Further, as reasoning implies a reasoner who knows that he is reasoning, consciousness, and the self that is conscious, are also assumed. Yet again, as we cannot conceive of actions or movements without assuming some power or force by which they are produced, we are compelled to assume the adequacy of the producing power or force; in other words, we have the principle of causality in virtue of which every one feels justified in saying whatever begins to be, every action, every movement, must be caused. It appears, then, that in the most elementary form of reasoning there must be acts or states of faith, as the consciousness of ultimates, without which the reasoning cannot advance a single step. By faith, in this sense, we perceive existence, relation, likeness, difference, quality, quantity, space, time, substance, action or movement, power or force, consciousness and self, and the principle of causality. These are absolutely necessary to comprehension in any degree, and thus at their root reason and faith are not two, but one; or, if they be two, faith is the foundation on which reason reposes.

"Now, the realities corresponding to these ultimate

beliefs, acts, or states, or intuitions of the mind—here designated faith—are, in the ordinary sense of the word, utterly incomprehensible. Naturally it must be so. For if comprehension means inclusion, that which includes everything else cannot be included in anything. But to say that because we do not comprehend them we do not know them, is, as we have seen, to say what is not true. On the contrary, the very fact that we can reduce all special knowledge to these ultimate forms shows how well we do know them; for, otherwise, the reduction would be impossible. We cannot reduce anything to its elements without knowing the elements. Otherwise, what should prevent us saying that all actions are varieties of space or all places varieties of time? And just as reason and faith as faculties, so knowledge and faith as operations, are ultimately one. It is true that, in popular speech, knowing (which, however, in this case, ordinarily means seeing) and believing are regarded as different, but at the root of our faculties there is no such separation. In this profounder sense, he that believes, knows; he that knows, believes. As a matter of fact, reason and faith are two aspects of one faculty; knowledge and belief, two aspects of one operation. To isolate either of these from the other is to injure both." At all events I claim to have made it clear that rationalism, to be justified at all, must be justified by an appeal to faith.

It will be seen that, in answering the rationalist, I have completed his answer to the sceptic. It may be well, however, to point out that the sceptic himself is as really dependent on faith as is the rationalist. This, indeed, has been already indirectly shown. The direct proof is given, however unconsciously, by the sceptic himself. He does not deny his own existence, or, if

he does, he does not deny that he denies it. Yet, if it is *his* denial, he asserts what he denies; for his it cannot be if *he* has no existence.

Thus, in the immense assumption here made, we have all the implications already dealt with in the case of the rationalist. The universal sceptic's only safety is not to speak at all. For the moment he says anything, no matter what, there is an act of faith. Nay, not even in silence would he be secure. While he lives at all, every action is based on assumptions. Life, in its every pulse, is a protest against assumptionless philosophy. So necessary is faith to man that not even the "absolute rationalist," not even the "universal sceptic," can exist without it; *and therefore both are unscientific*, in so far as they ignore its claims.

4. *Scepticism in the Light of Morals.*—Is there not another aspect of the subject with regard to which the errors of sceptics and rationalists are of a graver character still?

Yes, among the final or ultimate elements of faith, the highest in character and dignity are the fundamental ideas or feelings of truth and right. Like other ultimates, they can neither be proved nor disproved. "There can be no argument for either their rejection or acceptance which does not take them for granted. If under the pressure of his principle the sceptic rejects them, what reason can he allege? Obviously, he can only say they are not true, or they are not right. But to say truth is not truth, right is not right, is a contradiction in terms. In like manner the rationalist, though he may test all else by this standard, cannot demonstrate the standard itself. Attempting to prove that truth is truth, that right is right, is attempting to prove that what is, is. In every



argument, whatever its subject or its nature, the assumption is always present that when the truth and right have been reached the goal has been attained. Now, mark a special feature of these two ultimates, a feature which shows how closely they are allied. It is impossible to reject either without a feeling of shame, unless there has been first a degradation of character. One may, of course, with good reason, decline to follow this or that special course of study; and every one, no matter how great his capacity or his culture, must confess that he has acquired but a very small part of the sum total of possible knowledge. But however few the conclusions he has reached, once he perceives their truth he cannot, without dishonour, refuse them welcome. Though there are limits to our power of thinking, we feel that, so far as we think at all, we are under obligation to take pains to think truly. If now we turn to what are commonly called actions, like limits at once present themselves; and the same feeling of obligation presents itself also. It may be sometimes difficult to say whether certain actions possess the quality of rightness or not, just as we may be unable, with respect to certain propositions, to determine whether they are true or false. But once their moral quality is determined, there is no hesitation as to the feeling with which they must be regarded. There are limits, as we have said, to what we can do, but there can be no question, in a mind that is morally sane, that we are under obligation, so far as we act at all, to act rightly. If, therefore, rationalism would present itself as intellectually true or morally right, or, under either aspect, binding in honour, it must be by deriving its sanctions from the sphere of faith. It follows that to maintain unimpaired the power, to preserve unfettered



the function of reason, it is absolutely necessary to maintain and preserve the power and function of faith also. And this, as we have shown, reason itself, when the case is fairly presented, frankly confesses. And therefore the rationalist, like the sceptic, is unscientific in refusing to recognize the foundation of faith on which reason rests."

5. *Freethinking as a Principle.*—Is not the principle of freethought closely connected with that of universal scepticism?

Not formally. Universal scepticism must logically regard all inquiry as absurd. Freethinking, on the contrary, claims the right of unhindered inquiry into everything. Yet, if there is nothing but inquiry, it comes to the same thing as universal scepticism. It is usually, however, either, strange as it may seem, another word for the absence of freedom, or a synonym for antagonism to creeds. The latter is, perhaps, the more commonly accepted meaning, but I have never met a freethinker, as distinguished from a doubter, who was not a fatalist, a necessarian, a determinist, or whatever else may stand for the professed belief that all actions, internal and external—feeling, thought, volition, conduct—are the unavoidable and uncontrollable outcome of irresistible forces. It is really, though not always nominally, on this ground that the plea of irresponsibility for belief is urged. To openly say that there is no choice, that the will is in no sense, and to no extent, free, so plainly suggests the total absence of all moral quality in actions that objectors usually avoid that extreme. But when I am told that a man is no more to be praised or blamed for his belief than for the colour of his hair or the shape of his face, and in return I inquire, Is he to be praised or blamed for anything? the answer, when any is forthcoming, invariably

is, No. If, then, this theory be true, the name free-thinker can have no scientific justification. Can you call a machine free? If we take the meaning, rather than the name, it can only be justified on the showing that there is no such thing as right or wrong, that all moral distinctions are mere delusions, and that consciousness in testifying to freedom (within limits) is entirely untrustworthy. If consciousness, in so fundamental a distinction as this, is not to be trusted, why should we trust it at all? And if its testimony is to be rejected all along the line, what becomes of science? And, by the irony of error, if the theory were true, the freethinker would lose his strongest weapon. For that which has made him a power in the past has always been his appeal to moral sanctions. The bigotry, intolerance, and injustice of Christians, contrasted with their loud declaration of universal brotherhood, their pretended goodness and real selfishness, in a word, the virtue they professed and the vice they lived, have always been the feathers with which his arrows have been winged. Deprived of these, his quiver becomes a mere receptacle of useless rods.

The second meaning of the word is not necessarily, though it is usually, accompanied by the first. A man may admit free-will without seeing that it involves any obligation to have a creed. On the contrary, he may contend that it is just because he values his freedom so much that he will not encumber himself with any professions of faith. But this is to mistake the whole question. If freedom were the only end of life, and could it be thus secured, there might be something in the plea. But freedom is not the only end, and it cannot be thus secured. He who makes no right use of his freedom destroys its value, and he who will not endure the yoke

of truth must endure the burden of error. If a creed be true, its truth is adequate reason for its acceptance. Antagonism to creeds can only be justified on the ground that no creed is true. Will the freethinker affirm that? If he will, what about his own creed, which is, "I believe in freedom from creeds"? If he will not, then plainly his principle falls to the ground. Antagonism to creeds ought to disappear, and antagonism to what is false in creeds take its place.

There is yet another point. As regards praise or blame for belief, permit me to refer you to my "Problems" in which I have shown that error has not been always confined to one side. If it should be pleaded that to many, perhaps to most men, the necessary study is impossible, it follows, if the plea be made good, that so far as it is *impossible*, so far they are not responsible. But before drawing this conclusion, one ought to be very sure of the fact. The evidence for the proposition presented is very simple and direct; and it is almost incredible that the majority of mankind in civilized countries should be unable to study that. Any one who can and will thoughtfully and patiently study Christ in the Gospels, may surely find therein sufficient evidence to enable him to determine for himself whether he ought to believe, trust, love, and obey Him! And as to those who cannot, it is a very serious matter to take it upon themselves to say that the whole Church of God, including therein some of the profoundest intellects and noblest scholars the world has ever seen, has been wrong in so regarding Christ. Indeed, this is a serious matter to those also who can plead no such inability. Even a Hume or a Gibbon, a Spencer or a Huxley, might well hesitate before setting up his opinion against the continuous testimony of the

Church of God. In any case responsibility is for what men can, not for what they cannot, do.

6. *The Argument in Dialogue Form.*—Would you mind giving me an illustration of the conversational method of dealing with a freethinker?

Here is one.

"I do not believe in creeds," said an objector, "for they are only the invention of priests to keep the upper-hand of the people."

"Do you mean that there are some creeds you do not like, or do you condemn creeds altogether?"

"I object, not only to this or that creed, but also to the very principle. If you have any creed at all, you hinder thought, and render progress impossible."

"Well, that is a very serious charge, and if you can make it good, you will have given a severe blow to all religious bodies."

"Perhaps; and as a matter of fact, I believe dogmatic religion to be an evil; but it is only fair to say that the Dissenters claim to be 'free churches.'"

"Yes, but do they claim to be free from creeds? Let us see. Take the Presbyterians—they have a creed; and so have all the Methodists. Here, then, you have to make a very large exception."

"That is true; but I was thinking of Congregationalists and Unitarians, who distinctly say that they have no creeds."

"Let us look into this. I suppose you have heard of trust deeds, under which a great many chapels are held? Now, a large number of these deeds state what doctrines are to be taught, and either explicitly, or by implication, what doctrines are not to be taught. All these, therefore, have to be excepted."



"I suppose they must; but still there are many to whom your remarks do not apply. What do you say of them?"

"I will begin my answer with a question. Do you object only to the name creed, or also to the thing?"

"I object to the thing as well as the name. It is the *thing* which does the harm, whatever its name may be."

"In that case, we have to inquire whether the Congregationalists and Unitarians have really a creed or not. Do you suppose that men will have, or can have, a common worship if they have no belief in common?"

"I suppose not, but the Congregationalists are not a body with a common creed; they consist simply of distinct congregations, each free to believe what it will."

"I doubt whether Congregationalists would admit the correctness of that statement. For example, would Congregationalists 'recognize' a gathering of atheists, or of positivists, or of agnostics, or of deists, who formed themselves into a congregation, meeting regularly on Sundays?"

"Honestly, I do not think they would. What I must admit they mean is that each congregation is free to believe as it thinks right, within the broad limits of the Christian faith."

"'Within the limits of the Christian faith!' Then they have really a creed, whether so called or not. Besides, even were it true that each congregation was left free to determine its own belief, without the slightest restriction of any kind, yet, as soon as its belief was formed it would have a creed. No doubt the congregation could alter its creed from time to time, but what about the individual? His only freedom would be, if he differed from the congregation, to tolerate the difference as best



he could, or take himself off somewhere else. I will not urge the case of the Baptists, who, in their very name, profess a creed."

"I had not thought of it in that light before. But you must admit that the Unitarians have no creed."

"I admit nothing, and I assert nothing. I want you to reason it out for yourself, and come to your own conclusion. Let me ask you whether you ever knew any number of Unitarian ministers to preach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as set forth in the Athanasian Creed?"

"Certainly not, that would be too absurd. (Laughing.) Why, it would be a contradiction of their very name!"

"You are mistaken there, my friend. Any instructed member of the Church of England would tell you that all Trinitarians are Unitarians, though the so-called Unitarians are not Trinitarians. But I will not go into that now. What I want to know is, why, if Unitarians *have no creed*, Trinitarianism should not be preached in their pulpits?"

"Well, it would seem they have practically, at all events, a negative sort of creed; for certainly they deny the Trinity in Unity."

"So far we are agreed. But have they no positive faith? Do not they believe in the Divine Existence, the Divine Goodness, the Divine Love for man? Do they not believe in Jesus Christ as the greatest of all moral teachers? Do they not believe in a future life! Would they 'recognize' as Unitarians men who did not believe at all in God, in Christ, in a future life?"

"Really, after all, I think you are right. I give up the case of the 'Free Churches.' But this only proves what I have often suspected, namely, that all you Christians are tarred with the same brush. Some of you make great professions of freedom, but when it comes to the point,

you'll give up anything except Christ, and keeping Christ, you keep all. I am really very much obliged to you. The freethinkers alone are consistent."

"Have, then, the freethinkers no creed? Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely sure. That is just why we call ourselves freethinkers, because we have not a vestige or a scrap of a creed. Here, at least, no charge of inconsistency can be made. I defy you."

"Do not be alarmed, my friend. (Smilingly.) I shall make no charge of any kind. I only want you to convince yourself. May I ask if you think it right to maintain the Establishment?"

"Assuredly, no! I do not wish to wound your feelings, as you are a State-paid parson, but I regard the State patronage of the Church as a great wrong, in fact, as a crime. But what has this to do with the question?"

"Wait a little; you will see presently. I may say in passing that it is curious you should know so much more as to how I am paid than I know myself. I was not aware that the State paid me; however, let that pass. Suppose I were to say creeds have been a great benefit to mankind, what would you think of the statement?"

"I should think the statement so utterly false, that I can hardly imagine a sane man making it."

"That is strong language, my brother; but I will not at present dispute that point. Suppose, now, I were to say all poetry is against you, and that he who lives in the world of so-called free-thought lives in an atmosphere of eternal ugliness, what reply would you make?"

"I should answer, I do not see what you are driving at, and I wish you would come to the point; but the statement itself is a cruel slander. We have not had time

enough yet, as you have had, to develop grace and charm of style; but 'Vie de Jesus,' 'Literature and Dogma,' 'Supernatural Religion,' 'Robert Elsmere,' 'David Grieve,' 'The Story of an African Farm,' and the great works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Paine, might suffice to show how groundless is your ungenerous charge. We are as much believers in beauty as you are."

"Forgive me if I suggest a doubt as to whether even one of the writers quoted is or was altogether creedless. But were I now to say the whole tendency of free-thinking is destructive to science, inasmuch as it substitutes chance for cause, would you think the statement justifiable?"

"On the contrary, I should say we manifest a profounder faith in causation than you do; for you make an exception in favour of what you call free-will, and we make no exception at all."

"If we make an exception in favour of what we call free-will, it is because we own the authority of conscience, and that we find the consciousness of freedom within limits to be a part of the consciousness that we exist. I say for myself that I am as conscious that I am free, though within limits, as I am conscious of my existence; but I will not press that now. Suppose I maintain that what you call free-thinking is the veriest slavery to caprice, what then?"

"I should answer, all this is the 'veriest' trifling. It is because we hate slavery that we are freethinkers; and your charge is as ridiculous as it is unjust."

"I might reply, that you cannot be true thinkers without being subject to the yoke of the laws of thought; and thinking that is not true is in bondage to the false. But if it should be maintained that the tendency of

freethinking is destructive to progress, since it sets up every man as a standard for himself, and so prevents common or united action, and stands therefore in the way of great social movements, would you not find it difficult to answer?"

"Not a bit. I should appeal to history, and show the conspicuous part played by freethinkers in all political and intellectual reform. We have a grand heritage of glorious names, to which we are adding every day."

"Perhaps, if you were to produce this glorious roll-call, you would find on it very few who were freethinkers in the sense of having no faith at all. Now let us see whether you yourself have no creed."

"You may take my word for it. I am as free from creeds as the new-born babe."

"Your illustration is not altogether to the point, for if the new-born babe is as free from creeds as it is from industry, politics, science, literature, art, it is not free from the intellectual and moral laws of its being, which will produce a creed in due time."

"Perhaps, and those same laws will also in due time lead it to throw off its creed, as they have led me."

"It is, then, your opinion that you have no creed? Now, you have said it is not the name alone, but also the thing to which you object. What is a creed in its simplest form?"

"A belief, or set of beliefs, which are regarded more or less as binding. This is important, for of course I do not say I have no belief at all. In common with most of us, for example, I believe that there is a country called Russia, though I have never been there. I have many like beliefs, but I should not call them a creed."

"Just so. If, now, you will go back on the questions



I have put to you, the object of which was so concealed that you did not see 'what I was driving at,' you will discover that you have really made a confession of faith. Here is your creed—"I believe in truth, I believe in right, I believe in beauty, I believe in cause, I believe in freedom, I believe in progress."

(After some hesitation.) "Well, if that is what you mean by a creed, I cannot deny that I have one, one that is more binding than any other. But that is not what I meant by a creed. I meant the creed of the Churches."

"Very likely you did. But I wished to make you feel that they who live in glass-houses would do well not to throw stones; in other words—that in attacking the principle of creeds, you were demolishing so-called 'free-thought' in all those high qualities that make it attractive to natures like your own."

"I cannot deny that you have made me convince myself so far, and I shall not be in a hurry to attack the principle of creeds again. All the same, I am no nearer being a Christian than before."

"Perhaps you are nearer than you think. But I have done all that I undertook to do, *i.e.* to enable you to convince yourself. We are agreed as to the principle, and all we have now to do as to particular creeds, is not to denounce them straightway, but to ascertain whether or not they are true and right. That is something gained."

7. "*Secularism*" as a *Principle*.—You have said that universal scepticism is the belief, real or alleged, that nothing is certain; while Secularism is the belief, real or alleged, that only the secular is certain?

Yes. I have called "Secularism" precipitated worldliness; that is, worldliness which is not only a spirit, but also takes definite form as a principle, and seeks to justify



itself by reasons. It may be also called dogmatic ungodliness. It is obvious that the assertion "only the secular is practically certain," may mean either agnosticism or atheism. As we shall see, however, the word is unjustifiably used as including some unbelievers who can scarcely be called either atheists or agnostics. But really the one characteristic thing about its principles is the word "only."

8. *Atheistic-Agnostic Secularism*.—I suppose, however, in dealing with agnostic secularism you would also be dealing with atheistic secularism? I should be glad of an illustration of your method here also.

Practically, not nominally. Of course if the atheist were really an atheist, an argument which assumed the Divine Existence would be absurd. But the atheist of to-day admits an omnipresent Power, though he identifies it with the universe. The course to pursue with him would be to show that the agnostic is right in not identifying that Power with the universe. From that point on, the question would be one of interpretation. Here, however, is the illustration you asked for. The atheistic-agnostic secularist begins—

*A.* What do you mean by Theism?

*B.* Do you really not know what Theism is? What, then, do *you* mean by *atheism*?

*A.* I mean there is no God, or rather, that I do not know whether there is or not.

*B.* Well, then, I mean, so far, by Theism, that God is, and that I know He is?

*A.* How *can* you know it? You have never seen Him, have you?

*B.* I might answer, How can *you not* know it? But what right have you to say I have never seen Him?

*A.* Right enough. If you could see Him, so could I. But I never have seen Him.

*B.* Do you mean that I have never seen anything that you have not? Have you ever lived in any other country than England?

*A.* No; but do not begin beating about the bush. What has that to do with it?

*B.* Well, I have lived in another country, so I have seen something you have not.

*First Agreement.*—*Here then is our first point of agreement: One man may have seen what another has not seen.*

*A.* But that does not answer my question. Have you seen God?

*B.* Before I answer your question, I must know what you mean by "seen." Cannot one see with the eyes shut? Or see something the eyes never look upon?

*A.* Oh, you are going off into "figurative language," are you? You might explain away anything on that principle. Either you have seen God, or you have not.

*B.* My friend, the point I am dealing with is—What right have you to say, *I* have never seen God? What I want to know is, do you use the word "see" only with reference to the eyes? Let me put a case. It is a chemical "law" that the elements combine only in certain invariable proportions. If then I can show that oxygen and hydrogen are elements, it will follow that oxygen and hydrogen will combine only in certain invariable proportions. Do you see the truth of that?

*A.* Yes, I see the truth of that; but what I do not see is what chemistry has got to do with the subject.

*B.* Perhaps not. But, at all events, you use the word "see" of something else than your eyes.

*Second Agreement.*—Here is our second point of agreement: We may use the word "see" in another sense than seeing with our eyes. In this sense also one man may have seen what another has not seen.

*A.* At all events, you will grant that you have not seen God literally with your eyes?

*B.* Willingly. But is that all you mean by your atheism; that, in this meaning of the word, no man hath at any time seen God? In that sense, you are eminently Scriptural.

*A.* I mean more than that; but I may remind you that in a book like the Bible, so varied and often so contradictory in its contents, it would be strange if we were never "Scriptural," as you call it. The same book says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

*B.* That is a smart, but hardly more than smart, reply. For you have already admitted that seeing is not confined to the eyes. However, you have said your atheism is not simply the assertion that no one has seen God. What else is it?

*A.* It is an expression of our conviction that we have no sensible knowledge of God. We are not entitled to say whether He is or He is not.

*B.* We have, then, to consider the question of knowledge. Do you wish to convey that we have no knowledge except of the sensible?

*A.* If by "the sensible" you intend that which is the object of the senses, then I do mean that.

*B.* Perhaps, on reflection, you may modify that. May I ask if there are no chemical elements which we cannot know by seeing, or hearing, or touching, or smelling, or tasting?

A. You are right. I will modify the expression. I grant that there are elements that are not directly known to the senses, but are known by their sensible effects, responding, for example, to visible tests.

B. I felt sure you would see that. But let us note how far we have got.

*Third Agreement.*—Our third point of agreement is: *We have knowledge by sensible signs of that which is not itself sensible to us.*

A. Still, I seem no nearer to your Theism. I may grant all that without granting that there is Divine Existence.

B. Pardon me, that is not the point. I want not to give you my reasons for being a Theist, but to ascertain yours for being an atheist. You no longer urge the fact that God is not visible to the eyes; nor do you now contend that knowledge is limited to the sensible. What then are your reasons?

A. Though knowledge is not limited to, it must be justified by, the senses. For example, though I cannot see oxygen in a test tube, I can see the result of plunging into it a match that has been lighted, and only just gone out. The immediate "flare up" is a proof that oxygen is present. But how am I to test in this way the existence of a being whom you call God?

B. Let me ask you whether you do not know a cause to the extent in which you know its effects?

A. Yes; I agree with you in that. Oxygen may have powers about which I know nothing; but I know oxygen so far as I know its effects.

*Fourth Agreement.*—B. *This, then, is our fourth point of agreement: Any being which exists we know as cause so far as we know its effects.*

A. Yes, that is true.

B. If, then, nature be the name for an effect whose cause is God, we are justified in saying that to the extent in which we know the effect we know Him, not in other respects, but as Cause.

A. It seems reasonable enough to admit that. But then, *If*. I do not admit there is any need to go outside of nature.

B. Of that later. All I ask at present is the admission that if it should be shown that God is the cause of the universe, then, so far as we know the universe, we know its cause as cause. That you grant. Now let me ask you what you suppose the cause of the universe to be?

A. I do not admit the universe to be an effect; therefore there is no need to ask for its cause. Matter, I should say, is eternal. If it is indestructible, *i.e.* if it always will be, it is reasonable to suppose it always has been.

B. I do not think it necessary to discuss that question. But you will grant that the universe is.

A. Yes, of course.

B. Matter, then, not only exists, but it also exists as the universe. There is unity of arrangement without which it would not be the *universe*.

A. I suppose you will ask me, who arranged it? But in admitting what you call "arrangement" as a fact, I do not admit the implication that any one arranged it.

B. All in good time. Has the matter of the universe always existed as the universe such as it is now?

A. No. There is ample evidence that it is in a state of perpetual change. It is nearly certain that matter once existed in a state of what may be called primæval mist.



*B.* You do not deny that what begins to be is caused?

*A.* No. I believe in the universality of causation without making the exception you do in the case of freewill.

*B.* That point is not at present in dispute. You admit that the arrangement of matter as the universe began to be?

*A.* Yes. I admit, or rather I assert that.

*B.* What, then, was the cause of the arrangement?

*A.* I suppose it arranged itself.

*B.* I will discuss that presently.

*Fifth Agreement.*—*But meanwhile our fifth point of agreement is that the arrangement of matter into the universe was caused.*

*A.* I agree to that, but I do not see that it proves anything in favour of Theism.

*B.* You suppose the primæval mist arranged itself into the universe? That is rather a difficult supposition, because if it had the power to do that, one wonders why it should ever have existed in the state of primæval mist at all.

*A.* Possibly that was the result of the dissolution of a previous universe.

*B.* In what state in relation to movement is it supposed the primæval mist existed?

*A.* In a state of equilibrium.

*B.* What then disturbed the equilibrium?

*A.* That is a question I cannot answer.

*B.* But, surely, if we think at all, we must conclude that either the mist changed itself, or was changed by a cause not itself?

*A.* I do not admit the latter.

*B.* But do you hold the former?

*A.* I cannot say "Yes," because if the dissolved universe

reached a state of equilibrium, that is, of perfect balance, I can, as far as its own powers are concerned, think of no reason why it should not continue in that state for ever.

*B.* That is perfectly straightforward. You will admit, then, that as the state has been changed, and not by itself, it must have been changed by a power not itself?

*A.* I admit that, but I do not see that I am therefore entitled to call that power God.

*B.* I say nothing now about that.

*Sixth Agreement.*—*Our sixth point of agreement is that the change from the state of equilibrium was caused by a power other than matter.*

*A.* I may have overlooked something, but, at present, I see no escape from that conclusion.

*B.* Very well. How do you suppose the arrangement of matter after its emergence from the condition of primæval mist was carried out?

*A.* I am compelled to grant you a beginning in the disturbance of equilibrium, but I do not see that I need grant you any more. The forces inherent in matter are sufficient to account for the rest. I believe in creation by law.

*B.* Not, of course, literally, for you do not admit that matter was created at all?

*A.* That is true. What I mean is that matter developed itself, in virtue of its inherent power, according to the laws of its being.

*B.* Do you mean literally that matter developed itself?

*A.* Yes.

*B.* It is difficult to take that in.

*A.* Why?

*B.* Because one can hardly help asking whether the ultimate atoms of the primæval mist agreed among them-

selves to the exceedingly complex arrangement into compounds, and some of these compounds also agreed among themselves to their arrangement into organic bodies, and some of these organic bodies chose to become conscious beings, and some of these conscious beings chose to become moral, and all of them so to exist as to constitute the marvellous unity in variety we call the universe!

A. (Smiling.) Of course I do not mean that! You have given strong reason for holding that there is but one ultimate and eternal Power of which matter and force, as we know them, are the manifestations.

B. I thought we should reach that conclusion.

*Seventh Agreement.—This, then, is our seventh point of agreement: There is an omnipresent and eternal Power of which matter and force are manifestations.*

A. Yes, but that is not God.

B. Why not?

A. Because we know nothing more than that that Power is; *what* that Power is we do not know.

B. You grant that whatever is known to us is the effect of that Power?

A. Yes.

B. And you grant that so far as we know the effects we know the producing Power as cause?

A. Yes, but that gives us no right to allege anything more. It is impossible for the finite to know the infinite.

B. Pardon me. I have not introduced that question. I might reply you must have some consciousness of the infinite or you could not compare it with the finite; and also that one kind of infinite you have yourself implied when you speak of the eternal Power. But I prefer not to discuss that. Let us therefore speak simply of the omnipresent and always existing Power, or, for the sake

of brevity, the universal Power—meaning thereby that of which the universe is the manifestation.

A. I agree with you that that is the better phrase.

B. Then we will not ask what that Power is, except as it is manifest in the universe. Now let me ask you what may seem a needless question. Is the universal Power less than the universe?

A. Certainly not. How much more it may be we have no means of knowing, less it cannot be.

*Eighth Agreement.—B. This is our eighth point of agreement: The manifested Power, in the very meaning of the words, cannot be less than the totality, cannot be less than the highest of its manifestations.*

A. That, I think, cannot be denied.

B. Now, let me ask you, what, in your judgment, is the highest known manifestation of the universal Power?

A. Whether there may be others existing in the innumerable worlds in the depths of space or not, man is unquestionably the highest manifestation known up to the present.

B. But there may be others, and, therefore, it would not be safe to represent man as absolutely the highest type of what the universal Power has produced, still less of what that Power can produce?

A. That is true, and, therefore, we cannot argue from man to God.

B. You must not suppose I admit everything I do not combat. But whether that Power resembles man, or whether man resembles that Power, you will agree that the manifested cannot be less than the human manifestation?

A. Certainly. That is implied in what I have already said.

B. Not less, therefore, than conscious, volitional, *i.e.* personal?

A. The infinite cannot be personal.

B. I might answer that if you know the infinite cannot be conscious and volitional, then you *do* know the infinite, which you have already said you could not know. But we have agreed not to discuss that.

A. I had forgotten.

B. It is only too easy to forget. I do not ask you to say the omnipresent Power is conscious and volitional, *i.e.* personal.

A. I thought you did.

B. No. I ask you to admit what is only a fuller statement of what you have already granted, that the omnipresent Power is not *less* than conscious and volitional?

A. I suppose I must admit that.

*Ninth Agreement.*—B. *Our ninth point of agreement is: The omnipresent Power is not less than conscious and volitional, i.e. personal.*

A. Let me explain. I admit that, but I claim that the expression, "omnipresent Power," answers more truly to the facts than your word "God."

B. Why?

A. Because your expression exhibits the vice of anthropomorphism.

B. Tell me what differentiates organic from inorganic beings?

A. Life, that is the first step in the ascent.

B. And what is the next?

A. Intelligence.

B. And next?

A. The appearance of moral distinctions.



*B.* All these are manifestations of the one Power?

*A.* Yes.

*B.* But had the manifestation never risen higher than inorganic beings, it would still have been a manifestation of the omnipresent Power?

*A.* Yes, except that there would have been no one to whom the manifestation could be made.

*B.* But not a manifestation of so high an order?

*A.* No.

*B.* It follows, then, that what you call anthropomorphism is a higher manifestation than that in the ranks below man?

*A.* Yes.

*B.* So long, then, as we always remember that they are approximations only, we may properly use anthropomorphic terms?

*A.* Yes; but that fact is always forgotten.

*B.* I am not so sure of that. But is not the expression, "Our Father," a higher anthropomorphism than "Omnipresent Power"?

*A.* I do not admit anthropomorphism at all.

*B.* How are you going to escape the necessity?

*A.* I speak simply of power, not of person.

*B.* But whence comes the idea of power?

*A.* I suppose we get it from experience of our own muscular actions, the push and the pull of voluntary effort.

*B.* So, then, the idea of power is anthropomorphic. It is anthropomorphism of a lower kind to attribute power only to the Cause of the universe? The Christian anthropomorphism, in its purity, is, then, truer to all the facts, and higher in order of dignity, than yours?

*A.* I must take time to think about that. I hope we shall meet again.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NAME "SECULARISM."

1. *Introduction.*—I am puzzled by the name "secularism." What does it stand for?

"Secular" is, as you know, the English form of a Latin word which means "pertaining to the present age or world." "Secularism," as used by the two classes of unbelievers described in these pages, means not only the disposition to think and act for the present age alone, but also certain principles for the guidance of thought and action, so as to prevent faith in God and in a future life having any influence on conduct.

2. *Criticism of Secularism.*—But is not this use of "secularism" misleading?

It is. It implies that attention cannot be rightly given to the present life without disregard to a future. And it also suggests that trust in God is necessarily opposed to our present welfare. Now, "secularism" does not itself mean this; it means nothing like this. That which is "secular," that which pertains to the present age, is necessarily connected with both past and future. Past, present, future, are each related to the other, and to our feeling of time. It is quite impossible, even in thought, to cut out the present from the past and the future; and even if it could be done in imagination, it would not be true in fact. On any theory of the universe,

what we *think* as time relative is only the successive manifestations of that one force which is present in all phenomena as they appear in that which we *feel* as time absolute. There is no pause, no cessation, all is *becoming*, and hence all is related to the past *out* of which, to the present *in* which, to the future *into* which, it becomes. Any theory, therefore, of any given age, which does not recognize *origin* from the past and *tendency* to the future, as well as *being* in the present, must utterly break down. It is a theory opposed to, and crushed by, facts. Secularism, therefore, when rightly used, simply refers to any given age, in itself, and in its relations to the past and future.

3. *Secularism and a Future Life.*—But so far you rather justify the name than otherwise. The characteristic feature of secularism is that it fixes attention on what is called the present life, not excluding an earthly past or future?

That is true, and if that were all that Secularists meant by the name, it would be simply our duty to show that man's nature is spiritual as well as material, and that we ought, therefore, to live both lives, harmoniously, if possible, but in any case, holding the material subordinate to the spiritual.

The question with which we are at present concerned, however, is whether there necessarily arises any hindrance to the present, from faith in a future, life—whether our secularism would be injured by our hope of immortality. The answer must depend largely on our conception of how we ought to live, and whether we desire to live as we ought—for, in the nature of the case, faith in a righteous future life will not be favourable to an unrighteous present life. No doubt there have been, and probably still are,

many unworthy notions of future rewards and punishments ; notions originating rather in passion and prejudice than in conscience and reason. But to make this an objection does not touch the question itself ; it is an argument against mistakes only, and rather assumes than otherwise that immortality is a fact. What, logically, must be proved is that the belief in, or hope of, immortality is, in its own nature, necessarily opposed to our present welfare ; that, in short, secularism, in the proper meaning of the word, is impossible unless we ignore or deny immortality altogether. This, however, is just what no one can prove ; and yet, until it is proved, it is not legitimate, either morally or logically, to use the word secularism as if it necessarily implied unbelief in immortality.

4. *Secularism and Belief in God.*—If I understand you rightly you think the *onus probandi* rests on the Secularists, that is to say, it is for them to make good their position that the secular and the spiritual are incompatible ?

That, I think, is a reasonable position. If men *object* to any established system, one would say that they are not entitled to call upon us to *reject* that system unless and until they have made good their objections. All that we are bound in honour to do is, not to prove over again the truth of what we hold, but only to frankly face difficulties as they arise.

To resume, however, the case is still stronger in relation to faith in God. The emphasis laid on “the *present* age” in the meaning of the word secular—as if thereby to indicate that there is no future life—affords at least a shadow of excuse for the mistake. But there is no justification whatever for using the word secularism as if it implied unbelief in God. No doubt some Secularists are atheists, but only utter ignorance or folly could infer

from this that the word secularist means atheist. Some Secularists are Englishmen; does the word secularist mean Englishman? Some Secularists are Scotchmen; does the word secularist mean Scotchman? Some Secularists are miners, some are shoemakers, some booksellers; does the word secularist mean miner, shoemaker, bookseller? It would be equally logical to say that because some atheists are total abstainers, therefore atheism means total abstinence; or that because some atheists are drunkards, therefore atheism means drunkenness. There is absolutely nothing in secularism, except in its peculiar use by self-styled "Secularists," which implies unbelief in God.

Let it be remembered what secularism properly is. I have already pointed out that our ideas of time relative are dependent on the successive manifestations of that one force in time absolute, which is present in all phenomena. That one force then is ever present—as truly present now as in past, or as in future, present in all the phenomena of every age, and there can be no genuine secularism without recognition of the fact. Whether that force is spiritual or material—whether there is *essential* distinction between spirit and matter—whether that force be intelligent, moral, and personal, are questions I do not now discuss; nor do I ask whether a perfectly whole, full-orbed secularism would not of necessity answer all these questions in the sense of Theism; but assuredly there is nothing whatever in the nature of genuine secularism that requires an answer in the sense of atheism.

5. *Origin of the Name.*—How, then, has it come to pass that the word should be employed in this anomalous fashion?



I suppose there can be no doubt that Mr. Holyoake, who may be regarded as the first prominent man who used the word as the name of a given system, not only thought he was using a perfectly legitimate term, but really meant to number in one society all classes of men, Christians, Theists, atheists, who could be induced to accept his principles, and to work on his basis. But when his principles came to be examined, it gradually dawned on the minds of some even of his own followers, that no Christian could accept them without renouncing Christianity; and when the society had developed itself, its great leader, Mr. Bradlaugh, openly contended that no man could logically accept Mr. Holyoake's principles, without becoming an atheist.

6. *An Objection answered.*—But might not a similar objection be urged against the "Methodists," for certainly they are not the only Methodists in the world?

That might be true to a slight extent. But two things must be noted. They who called themselves by that name did not deny what other methodists held, whereas those who call themselves Secularists *do* deny what other secularists hold. And there is not, as far as I know, any *body* originally calling itself by the name of Methodist alone. The oldest of these societies is called Wesleyan Methodist, the next Methodist New Connexion, the next Primitive Methodist, the next Reformed Methodist, and the last the United Methodist Free Church. All the offshoots adopted the name they took merely to distinguish themselves from the parent body, not to set up as the only Methodists, and the parent body itself did not desire to pose as the only methodists, but, as what they were, of the Wesleyan type. So far as it has, with them, become otherwise, the name is a misnomer. But the principal thing is that

they do not mean to deny what the others hold ; so-called Secularists do.

7. *Secularism and Theism.*—How would you define true secularism ?

Secularism, in its proper meaning, as indicating the just principles, laws, and objects of the present life, is a fitting word ; as used by those who claim it as their distinctive title, while their real characteristic is unbelief in God and in a future life, it is one of the most inappropriate terms in our language. It is true that he who thoughtfully studies and obeys the laws of the present life, even though he think that those laws extend no further, is a secularist. But in a profounder sense, he also is a secularist who regards those laws which govern him now as being essentially the same as those which will govern him hereafter, as laws of a life which can never cease to be life. Indeed, while a true atheist *may* be, a true Theist must be, a secularist ; that is to say, it is in the very essence of his Theism to live as nobly, as rightly, as wisely as he can in this present life. Secularism is not necessarily involved in atheism, but it is necessarily involved in Theism. A genuine atheist, as an atheist, may not choose to trouble himself about the present any more than about the future life ; a genuine Theist, as a theist, must study to live well now, if he would not lose both present and future life.

8. *Necessity of a Qualifying Term.*—It is certainly a misleading name. How do you get over the difficulty ?

We are compelled to use some qualifying phrase. The words “distinctively considered” are employed to avoid the possibility of doubt on the subject. I do not intend to discuss the value of secularism in the large and noble sense in which it is, or may be, common to all thoughtful men. The Secularism with which I am concerned is that

which is characteristic of those who claim the word as a distinctive title; and in so far as it is characteristic. In so far as those who take the name study and obey the laws made known by science, their conduct is not brought into question. Their unbelief, not their appreciation of science, is their distinctive feature.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SECULARISM OF MR. HOLYOAKE.

1. *Introduction.*—You employ the words “self-styled” and the like simply as a means of identification.

Yes. I distinguish between the larger meaning which belongs to every one, and the smaller signification which belongs to the particular sect; in other words, I differentiate the special sense of secularism, in which it indicates the sect, from the general sense, in which it indicates all who attend rightly to the concerns of the present life. The words “self-styled,” “so-called,” “distinctively considered,” are not therefore used in any spirit of sarcasm or disrespect; but simply by way of distinction.

You say “particular sect.” Is there more than one sect of secularists?

Perhaps not more than one sect, but there is, or, at least, there was, more than one party or type. The first represented by Mr. Holyoake; the second by Mr. Bradlaugh.

2. *Principles.*—But what are the “principles” professed by Secularists?

As set forth by Mr. Holyoake they are as follows:—

(1) Secularism maintains the sufficiency of secular reason for guidance in human duties.

(2) The adequacy of the utilitarian rule, which makes the good of others the law of duty.

(3) That the duty nearest at hand and most reliable in

results, is the use of material means, tempered by human sympathy, for the attainment of social improvement.

(4) The sinlessness of well-informed sincerity.

(5) That the sign and condition of such sincerity are—freethought, expository speech, the practice of personal conviction within the limits of neither outraging nor harming others.

The first or foundation principle excludes all those who believe in Revelation. It is clearly impossible for any such to believe in the sufficiency of "secular" reason for guidance in human duties. At one stroke all Christendom is excluded. The second principle, which recognizes the utilitarian rule of morals, shuts out all moralists who, though not Christian, yet refuse, like Mr. Herbert Spencer, to subscribe to the doctrine of the adequacy of the utilitarian rule of morals. The third principle depends on the use of material means for the attainment of social improvement, and at least appears to involve materialism, though with an implied possibility of another kind. The fourth principle is an amendment of the doctrine of the sinlessness of sincerity by the insertion of the word well-informed. The fifth principle requires some explanation of what is intended by free-thought. At present, however, let us confine our attention to the first principle.

3. *The First Principle*.—I understand. What you are about to show is that the thing which, in their professed creed or rule of life, marks them off from others, is their unbelief?

Yes, that is just it. "Secularism maintains the sufficiency of secular reason for guidance in human duties." But the question is, *what* secularism? Some hold the sufficiency of the reason who are not atheistic,



though they do not believe in revelation. But then they speak simply of reason, without the distinctive word "secular." Mr. Holyoake will hardly grant that there is any reason not secular; for then it would be natural to suppose that the non-secular reason had a non-secular sphere of its own; and this would be giving up his position. Neither, I suppose, will it be admitted that there are duties not human; though I am not sure that Mr. Holyoake does not imply a possibility of duties relating to God rather than man. At least, these phrases, "secular reason" and "human duties," seem to admit that there may be a God in reference to whom faith becomes a Divine reason, and towards whom Divine duties may be performed. With theistic secularism we have no quarrel. Whether sufficient or insufficient for guidance in human duties, we do not now inquire. It is enough to show that "secularism" in its distinctive sense is atheism, and that atheistic secularism is unreasonable. Genuine secularism may be either theistic or atheistic, but cannot be neither. It is impossible to act, without being an atheist, on predetermined principles of conduct which ignore the question of whether there is a God. The Theist, as we have seen, would, of necessity, violate his Theism, and become either a hypocrite or an atheist, if he were to admit that his conduct is to be uninfluenced by his faith in God. Logically and morally he who deliberately accepts the principle that he ought to ignore Theism, must have arrived at the conclusion that he cannot know whether there is a God; or that there is not sufficient evidence to justify the belief that there is; in other words, he must be an atheist. If, on the other hand, it were true that there is no God, no immortality, then all our thoughts, passions, purposes, life, can only

have reference to this present world; they cannot have reference to God, if God exist not; they cannot have reference to future life, if no such life can be. Not only on this showing is secular reason the only reason we have, but our imagination, conscience, and faith, are also secular.

But if so, what is meant by duties? Is there in man a sense of obligation to do certain things, to leave certain other things undone? Is this sense of obligation natural and constitutional? If so, does it not point in the direction of a moral Creator? But is conscience simply an impression which circumstances make on the mind? In that case would it not be reasonable to say that there are no duties, or that what we call such mean only that there are actions which self-interest or society induces or compels us to perform? But, then, why talk of morality at all? I might urge these and questions of a similar kind. But I only wish, at present, to bring out clearly the truth that if the atheistic secularist's position be right—that there is no God, no immortality—then it is absurd to make any distinction between secular and non-secular. Let it then be granted, for the sake of argument, that the atheistic secularist is right; that there is no God; that there will be for us no future life; let this be granted: let it equally be granted that there never has been a God; that man never has found any life after death; then it must follow that men have not now, that men never had, anything but atheistic secularism. Now, during the long period man has existed on the globe, there have come into being many theologies. On the assumption that there is no God, no immortality, these theologies must have been invented by atheistic secularists. It may be said that they are the offspring of the imagination and faith. But if there be no God, no immortality, are not the imagination

and faith as truly atheistically secular as the reason itself? And thus the atheistic-secular imagination and faith war with the atheistic-secular reason.

But even the reason itself cannot escape. No system could exist without some help from the reason. The imagination may be the chief power at work; but if there be a system at all, reason must have been at work to produce the arrangement indispensable to a system. So then the atheistic-secular reason must itself have contributed to the very theologies it now condemns. But, it may be said, it is impossible that atheistic-secularism should have invented Theism. In that case it must be admitted that man is *not* an atheistic-secular being; that there are capacities in his nature to which Theology is adapted; that there are powers in his nature which find their exercise in Theology. In other words, it must be admitted that man has a natural tendency towards, a natural capacity for, what is called the supernatural. But then, is it not reasonable to regard the capacity for, the tendency towards, the supernatural, as a very strong presumption that there is a God? But whether this last point be admitted or not, the capacity and tendency do exist, and cannot be governed by atheistic-secular reason. In this respect, therefore, what is called secular reason is *not* sufficient. But if during so many thousands of years the atheistic-secular reason has failed to control imagination and faith, it is too late to tell us now that it is sufficient for guidance in human duties. Once more. It is inconceivable that Theology could have existed so long, in every part of the world, and should have such powerful hold upon the world now, if it did not meet some wants in human nature which secularism, even in its noblest sense, cannot wholly supply; and which in its atheistic sense it

cannot supply at all. Take which horn of the dilemma we will. Either man is, on the assumption that there is no God, no immortality, an atheistic-secular being only, in which case atheistic-secularism is responsible for all the theologies that exist; or else there are capacities, powers, and wants in human nature for which atheistic-secularism provides no exercise, and can find no supply.

4. *The Second Principle.*—You have given so much time to the first principle, because it is as you say, the foundation of the rest. How do you deal with the second?

In a similar manner. The second principle would make the good of others the law of duty. Now one would expect a fair rule of duty to include the right treatment of ourselves as of others; and therefore this rule is *not* adequate. Again, it is a question whether the utilitarian rule does make the *good* of others the law of duty; whether at the best the “good” it would supply ought not rather to be rendered “goods;” whether, therefore, it is not simply a commercial rule, and not a moral law. But even granting that it is moral, this rule of utility is not sufficient; for before we begin to do good we must find out what *good is*. But then it is said this can only be known by experience, so that we must act for some time without morality in order to learn what morality is. Again, we ought to do good to all men, or at least to the greatest number. But we cannot do this until we find out what the greatest number needs. Now, as the greatest number consists of some hundreds of millions of human beings, we should probably be a considerable age before we began to be moral. So far is this rule, considered in itself, from being adequate. It has, however, this use. It points out most clearly the need of revelation as a moral guide.



For, assuming that the good of others is to be the law of duty, then who so well as God can know what that good is? And if the "others" whose good we are to study, means *all* others, then, who but God can tell us what all need? So then utilitarianism is itself a witness for the need of revelation. But it is needless to discuss this doctrine. Whether true or false, utilitarianism did not originate with, and is not confined to, "secularism." It is accepted by many thinkers—both Christian and non-Christian—who do not accept Secularism. It is not, therefore, a distinctive mark of "Secularists."

5. *The Third Principle*.—I can anticipate your treatment of the third principle. What it really comes to is that none but atheists could be consistent members of the Holyoakian Secular Society?

It does come to that. The third principle speaks of material means. If what we call mind be material, if love, thought, faith, conscience, be functions, or qualities, of a material organization, then no doubt material means are not simply the best, but they are the only means we can employ. Mr. Holyoake would include all available science in the means to be employed for social improvement; and so also would Christian secularism, without implying that there are no means not material. But this principle also speaks of a duty *nearest* at hand and *most* reliable in its results. What does this mean? Are there other duties not so near at hand? other results not so reliable? Is this an implicit acknowledgment that there may be a God, whose will may be known and ought to be done? But if so, it is preposterous to speak of duties not so near at hand. All duties, just in so far as they are duties, are close at hand. Why, too, is the duty of employing material means *most* reliable in results, unless



it is admitted that there are also spiritual means whose results are not so reliable? But if so, the spiritual means should, in their own province, be as much employed as material means in theirs. Yet if this be true, to exalt material means at the expense of spiritual is to treat the thought of God in a way far more offensive than actual atheism. And this would render it impossible for any conscientious theistic secularist to be a member of a society having such an article in its creed. But if it is intended to express indifference to, or unbelief in God, then for this reason also no theist could have anything to do with such a society. It appears, then, that this principle has nothing peculiar to Mr. Holyoake's position but a doubtful atheism. But taking this principle in the best light we can, it is not peculiar to "Secularism." If the expression be somewhat modified; if the *superlatives* be omitted and we simply assert its substance—that it is a duty to use material means tempered by human sympathy for the attainment of social improvement—then it is wholly unobjectionable, and may be accepted by every class of thinkers. It is, however, in no sense the special property of "Secularism."

6. *The Fourth Principle*.—I should not have supposed beforehand that anybody would have set up the "sinlessness of sincerity" as a distinctive doctrine. Surely no one ever supposed that to be sincere could be a sin!

The phrase is certainly open to that remark. It is, however, intended in another sense than that. It reminds one of the old statement: "It does not matter what a man believes if he is only sincere." This plea does at least admit the possibility of the unbeliever not being sincere; and implies that his insincerity will matter a great deal to him. Sincerity must, of course, make an

immense difference in the moral condition of a man, and must, we may reverently say, affect not only the human, but also the Divine judgment. But it does not follow that in the case of the sincere man beliefs are of no consequence. Certainly, beliefs are of immense importance in the political life of a nation. Whether Englishmen believe in this or that form of government, or in any government at all, makes considerable difference to our national and individual safety and progress. We often hear complaints made, and justly made, against persecution and persecutors. But persecutions have often been the result of certain beliefs of sincere men. If, then, in such cases, sceptics suffer from persecution, they ought not, on their own principle, to complain. But, it may be said, the principle does not apply to this life, only to the future. Yet if it works badly here, why should it be supposed to work well there? Sincerity no more saves a man from future effects on himself of wrong-doing, than it saves others from those effects; nor is the wrong-doing, as such, less blamable when he himself suffers, than when he makes others suffer. A sincere man may be ignorant, or infatuated, or prejudiced. Where it was within a man's power to know, to be sober-minded, to look fairly at a question, does not ignorance, infatuation, prejudice deserve blame? Will sincerity keep a man well who breaks the laws of health? Will sincerity make the man wise who ignores the laws of understanding? Will sincerity make perfect the man who trusts to instinct, without learning and obeying the simple laws that ought to govern moral effort? And yet the sinlessness of the sincere man is still a doctrine popular with many Secularists, notwithstanding that Mr. Holyoake long ago saw it morally necessary to abandon the dogma,

in its old shape, and to hold instead that sincerity must be well-informed. He says: "If a man is to justify his sincerity to his conscience, if his sincerity is to be without sin, then he must make up his mind; he must know all about the subject he can know when he professes to be sinless upon it. I use the term to put an end to that commonplace sincerity which so many people have, which is ignorant sincerity, which is cruel and blind, notwithstanding it is sincere, because it is ignorant. A man has no right to say, My sincerity shall be respected, until he has taken care not to have an ignorant and narrow and prejudiced sincerity; he is bound to have as enlarged a sincerity as he possibly can compass."<sup>1</sup> One is glad that Mr. Holyoake came to see and to say this; but it is a manifest abandonment of the old plea, that if a man is only sincere, he can have nothing to dread in another world. If sincerity may be cruel, blind, ignorant, sinful, clearly it cannot save a man from the natural consequences of cruelty, blindness, ignorance, sin, either in this world or the world to come. But the sinlessness of a well-informed sincerity is not a doctrine peculiar to "Secularism." Indeed many "Secularists," perhaps the majority of them, reject the word "well-informed" altogether.

7. *The Fifth Principle.*—The fifth principle amounts only to a claim for free thought and free speech under conditions which I suppose most of us would accept?

Yes; in fact all that need be said under this head, may be given in Mr. Holyoake's own words. He, though not always true to his own logic, has earned the right to be heard with respect. "If men are silent," says Mr. Holyoake, "concerning objects and principles, it is said

<sup>1</sup> "Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh," p. 22.

they have none; and it is impatiently asked where is their bond of union? And no sooner is it explained, than they are told it is very unphilosophical to think of setting up a creed. Where the alternatives are thus put against them, they should take their own course. Creeds are the necessary exponents of conviction. The creedless philosopher is out on the sea of opinion without compass or chart. To bind yourself for the future to present opinions is doubtless unwise; but he who has inquired to any purpose, has come to some conclusion, affirmative, negative, or neutral; and it is the province of a creed to avow the actual result and the consequent conduct intended to be followed. It is the vice of freethinking that it spreads universal uncertainty, and assumes right and wrong to be so protean that no man can tell one hour what opinion he shall hold the next."<sup>1</sup> But the right which Mr. Holyoake most wisely restricts is claimed by all who think out any conclusions for themselves, and is in no wise peculiar to "Secularism."

8. *Peculiarity of Secularism.*—The question remains What *is* peculiar to "Secularism"?

Mr. Holyoake says, "By Secularism is meant that we cleave to nature; we try to search out the facts of nature, and if we are not afraid of curtailing our creed within the limits of our knowledge, it may include the discovery that he is more moral than the theist may prove to be, who travels farther from nature, and from that experience which best teaches us morality."<sup>2</sup> But "cleaving to nature" is characteristic of every scientific man, it is not peculiar to a particular sect. "I have continually said," he adds, "that Secularism was not proposed as a new name for

<sup>1</sup> "Logic of Facts," p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> "Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh," p. 21.



an old subject, not as a new name for old freethinking, or for the old antagonistic and oftentimes ferocious atheism; but that we proposed a new name for a new form of freethought, in which we would deal with the agreements at which freethinkers had arrived, maintaining those propositions about which we have agreed in common, and which were perfectly independent of atheism or theism.”<sup>1</sup> It proposed “to set up principles of nature in the place of the principles of theology, and found if possible a kingdom of reason, for those who found the kingdom of faith inadequate and unreliable.” Now, in all this, there is surely nothing characteristic, except the opposition to theology. Mr. Holyoake appears to have only one distinctive doctrine, viz. the sufficiency of science. Subtracting from “Secularism” all that is not peculiar, what appears to be left is the assertion that science is independent of both Theism and atheism. Thus, Mr. Holyoake strove hard to establish a secularism that should assert nothing about God and Christ. With consummate tact, with great earnestness, he endeavoured to persuade all who would listen, that there might be a secularism which was neither theistic nor atheistic. Had Mr. Holyoake contented himself with saying that any two men ought to be able to work together without asking each other any questions about their theological views, he would have asserted a principle of humanity which appears to be a very important and a very Christian one. But when he virtually says to the theist, In your secularism ignore your Theism, your Christianity, he asks him to do what no theist could do without becoming unworthy of the name of man. No true theist dare, nor if he dare would he choose, to ignore the idea of God. And though Mr. Holyoake

<sup>1</sup> “Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh,” p. 3.



dreamed a lofty dream which he called Secularism, yet its interpretation is atheism. Of positive teaching his system gives us nothing that is not the common inheritance of man; extract this, and atheism only is left.

It is in vain that faults, having their source in human nature, are attributed to Christianity. We have been accused of the guilt of slavery, but it was the quickened Christian conscience of England that abolished slavery. We have been accused of intolerance, bigotry, and cruel wrong in days of persecution; but it is just because Christianity has stronger hold on our passions now that we are better to-day. We have been accused of indifference to the state of the poor; but it was the Christian spirit in the heart of the nation that built, and now supports, our hospitals; that poured the wealth of England into Lancashire in the cotton famine, as it did years before, when food failed, into Ireland. We know there is yet a tremendous work to be done. The agricultural labourer is ill-paid, ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed; Christ teaches us to help him, with all heartiness, to improve his condition. The poor in our great towns are suffering fearfully from drunkenness and improvidence; Christ teaches us to aid them to be sober and prudent. The great corporations are dull, and sluggish, and careless about the sanitary condition of the masses; it is a Christian duty to rouse them to activity by a ceaseless and fearless criticism. Parliament does not always understand working men's questions; it is a Christian aim to educate public opinion until members shall be returned who do understand such questions. The people are liable to suffer from combinations that bring evil only; it is a part of our Christianity to teach them the secret of co-operation. Bad passions have flamed up between employer and

employed; Christianity commands us to do all we can to create a wise public opinion that will rule both. These are only broken hints of the manifold work that still needs to be done, which our Christianity will yet rouse us to do. Our faults are of ourselves; our virtues are of our faith; and our faith is conquering and will conquer our faults.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SECULARISM OF MR. BRADLAUGH.

1. *Introduction.*—I judge, from what you have already said, that Mr. Bradlaugh saw clearly whither Mr. Holyoake's principles led. What was his own creed on the subject?

These are the principles Mr. Bradlaugh defended when he was president of the "National Secular Society:"—

(1) This association declares that the promotion of human improvement and happiness is the highest duty.

(2) That the theological teachings of the world have been, and are, most powerfully obstructive of human improvement and happiness; human activity being guided and increased by a consciousness of the facts of existence, while it is misguided and impeded in the most mischievous manner when the intellect is warped or prostrated by childish and absurd superstitions.

(3) That in order to promote effectually the improvement and happiness of mankind, every individual of the human family ought to be well placed and well instructed, and all who are of a suitable age ought to be usefully employed for their own and the general good.

(4) That human employment and happiness cannot be effectually promoted without civil and religious liberty; and that, therefore, it is the duty of every individual—a duty to be practically recognized by every member of this association—to actively attack all barriers to equal freedom

of thought and utterance for all, upon political and theological subjects.

2. *Mr. Bradlaugh's Interpretation.*—It is very important to know how Mr. Bradlaugh understood his own principles. I therefore repeat his words. "Although at present it may be perfectly true that all men who are Secularists are not yet atheists, I put it to you as also perfectly true that, in my opinion, the logical consequence of the acceptance of Secularism must be that the man gets to atheism if he has brains enough to comprehend."<sup>1</sup>

From this passage alone would it not appear as if Mr. Bradlaugh held that though Secularism itself was not necessarily atheism, yet it was a sort of inclined plane, conveniently smooth, upon which, if a man once set himself, he must slide down into atheism, unless through some perversion of intellect he were induced to make a violent effort, and stop himself half-way?

Yes. But Mr. Bradlaugh used yet stronger language. In reference to the existence of God, he said: "To me every idea of God is such that as a Secularist I am bound to deny."<sup>2</sup> . . . I do not deny God, because the word conveys to me no idea, and I cannot deny that which presents to me no distinct affirmation. I cannot war with a nonentity. If, however, God is affirmed to represent an existence which is distinct from the existence of which I am a mode, and which it is alleged is not that existence, then I deny God, and affirm that it is impossible any such existence can be. That is, I affirm that there is one existence, and deny that there can be more than one."<sup>3</sup> In reference to a future life, he said: "I say it is absolutely immoral and absolutely unsecularistic—against the whole

<sup>1</sup> "Debate with Mr. Holyoake," p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

principles of Secularism, as I understand them—to admit the possibility of conduct in this life being the subject of trial, judgment, and sentence after death, and in some future world; and I urge that the whole basis of our Secular cause is in direct ignoring and denial of the possibility of any such state of existence at all.”<sup>1</sup> As to the delusive nature of a “Secularism” professing to be independent of both atheism and theism, he said, “I do not urge, and I shall be sorry to urge, that there is any attempt on the part of a man like Mr. Holyoake to betray anybody into the acceptance of anything, but I do urge it as a betrayal of a man into your principles if you tell him we can take a ground which it is utterly impossible for human thought to take, a ground which it is utterly impossible for any thinker even in mind for a moment to put himself upon independently of theism or atheism.”<sup>2</sup>

3. “*Secularism is Atheism.*”—Six months later Mr. Bradlaugh expressed his views in even more decisive language, from which it appears that he did not simply think that Secularism *led* to atheism, but that it *was* atheism itself. His exact words are: “Then there is another point that I do not know that I need trouble to discuss—whether Secularism is atheism or not—because I think it is. I have always said so, I believe, for the last thirteen years of my life, whenever I have had an opportunity of doing so; and it is hardly likely, therefore, that I should come here to-night, without any reason for doing so, to recant all my previous convictions, and to make an allegation utterly inconsistent with all my previous arguments.”<sup>3</sup> It is clear, then, that Mr. Brad-

<sup>1</sup> “Debate with Mr. Holyoake,” p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> “Newcastle Debate,” p. 13.



laugh did not dream with Mr. Holyoake of a secular society, which should include both theists and atheists, and yet exclude both theism and atheism. Mr. Holyoake failed because his principles, when fairly examined, were found to involve atheism; Mr. Bradlaugh avoided this peril by boldly making atheism itself the real basis of co-operation in a "Secular" society.

4. *The Principles, save in One Clause, not "Secular."*—And yet is it not very curious that, though "Secularism" is confessedly atheism, it is not visible at first glance in its "principles"?

That is true. It is concealed in a corner, and only comes out when dragged out. It is not to be found in the fourth principle; it is not apparent in the third; we search in vain for it in the first; it is hidden behind one phrase in the second. Now it is confessed that "Secularism" is atheism. How, then, is it that we have here four principles of which only one contains this distinguishing feature of "Secularism"? Is it not because atheists themselves instinctively feel, or by experience know, that they must add something to their atheism before they can possess any useful principles at all? Is it not a tacit confession that atheism, as such, has no positive teaching to give? But one little phrase belongs to atheists; all the rest are common property. We may differ in judgment as to the mode in which they are to be carried out, not as to the substance of the principles themselves. We hold that the promotion of human improvement and happiness is an imperative duty; and if we do not call it the highest, it is because we do not deem it right to set one duty against another, each duty being in its own place and in its own time of infinite authority. We desire every individual of the human family to be

well-placed and well-instructed, and all who are of suitable age to be usefully employed for their own and the general good. We desire civil and religious liberty; our fathers bled for it. And who among us would not do the same if the same necessity arose? There are barriers to be attacked—barriers of pride, and passion, and prejudice; remnants of barbarism to be removed; evils there are still in our Constitution; blots there are still in our statute books; sorrows innumerable among our people. Our dislike of Mr. Bradlaugh's extravagance will not prevent us recognizing the fact that there is a great and most difficult work still to be accomplished; and we ought not to allow the faults and mischievous pretensions of atheism, whether speaking in its own name or under the guise of "Secularism," to hinder us in our labour for the common good—a labour which is prompted and sustained by Christianity itself. In the noblest Christian Secularism it is our duty to take our place and to do our share of the work that yet needs to be done; to do it honestly, earnestly, constantly, continually adding to the strong tide of purifying influence which flows through successive generations until there is no evil left in the land. It appears, then, that these four principles, except the phrase about the theological teachings of the world, are involved in the very heart of Theism, and are in no sense peculiar to the so-called Secular society. Of that body atheism alone is the distinctive mark.

5. *The Value of "Secularism."*—You come now, having defined its nature, to inquire into its value?

Yes, that is my next point. It being thus confessed that "Secularism" is atheism, my work is very much simplified, and I have now merely to examine atheism, bearing in mind that since atheism is, in the words of

an accredited lecturer of the Secular Society, the "logical definition of Secularism," whatever are the characteristics of atheism are the characteristics of Secularism, these words being but two terms for one and the same thing. It is thus described by Mr. Holyoake: "Atheism—objectionable as it is from wanton negative associations—is a far more wholesome term. It is a defiant militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature. It is a relief to get out of the crowd who believe because their neighbours do, who pray by rote, and worship through fear; and win your liberty to wander in the refreshing solitude, where the heart may be honest and the intellect free. Affirmative Atheism of the intellect is a proud, honest, intrepid, self-respecting attitude of the mind. The Negative Atheism of mere ignorance, of insensibility, of lust, and gluttony, and drunkenness, of egotism or vanity whose talk is outrage, and whose spirit is blasphemy; this is the gross negation of God which superstition begets in its slavery, and nurtures by its terrors. These species of atheism I recognize only to disown and to denounce them. Of these the priest is the author who preaches the natural corruption of the human heart, who inculcates the guilt of free thought, the distrust of reason, and despair of self-reliant progress. Utterly different from this is the atheism of reflection, which seeks for conclusive evidence, which listens reverentially for the voice of God, which weighs carefully the teachings of a thoughtful theism; but refuses to recognize the officious

incoherent babblement of intolerant or presumptuous men." <sup>1</sup>

6. *Confusion of Atheism and Science.*—It is, I think, impossible not to perceive in these words the spirit of a noble, thoughtful, and earnest thinker, to whom truth is dearer than consistency?

I entirely agree with you. Mr. Holyoake has won for himself a respect rarely accorded to, and rarely deserved by, atheists. The candour which is evinced in his more matured productions, the disposition to give a fair hearing to the arguments on both sides, and his repeated efforts to keep controversy free from personalities, as well as the great natural abilities which all his writings display, have combined to place him, in the judgment of thoughtful men, in the very front rank of debaters on religious topics. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that the atheism of which Mr. Holyoake boasts is not atheism at all. It is not atheism, but science, which brings us face to face with nature. It is not in the solitude of atheism, but in the love and in the presence of truth, that the heart becomes honest, and the intellect free.

7. *What is Atheism?*—What, then, is atheism itself?

The derivation of the word is familiar enough; though of course no Christian will believe that any man is literally without God. By atheism is intended the belief, attitude, or spirit which professes to be without God, either in the sense that God is not, or in the sense of ignorance as to whether He is or not. Very often the real meaning of the word has been forgotten on both sides. As in the early days of Christianity, those who did not believe in the heathen gods were called atheists by those

<sup>1</sup> "Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh," pp. 46, 47.



who did, so Christians too commonly bestow the name of atheists upon those who do not agree with their conceptions of God. It ought to be unnecessary to explain that they only are to be called atheists who do not believe in God at all. An infidel in the usual, though not in the accurate, meaning of the word, is one who does not believe in Christianity; a theist or deist is one who believes in a personal God without necessarily accepting the common conceptions of deity; a pantheist is one who believes that all is God; an atheist is one who believes that nothing is God, or believes not that anything is God.

8. *The Value of Atheism.*—By the way, what is meant by “Affirmative Atheism”?

It is simply a confusion of atheism with the positive knowledge which atheists acquire. Of course, in the proper meaning of the word, for which any dictionary may be consulted, no one can find anything but negative force. A man who is an atheist may be more than an atheist, for he may be a workman, a student of science, a politician, and so on. But in his character as an atheist, all that he is, is purely negative. In atheism, *as* atheism, there is not only no science, no system of morality, there is nothing positive. The atheist’s vocabulary is confined to the words, “I doubt,” “I do not know,” or, “I deny.” Mr. Holyoake, though in apparent forgetfulness of his own use of the phrase, “Affirmative Atheism,” admits that atheism, as such, gives us no system of truth, no scheme of morality.<sup>1</sup> But Mr. Bradlaugh’s vigorous imagination scorns such narrow bounds. Never mind the proper meaning of the word; it *shall* mean whatever I please. This is what Mr. Bradlaugh’s method implies. “Atheism properly understood”—that is, understood, not

<sup>1</sup> “Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh,” p. 21.



according to the Greek language, nor according to the English language, nor according to the language of common sense, but according as Mr. Bradlaugh is determined it shall mean—"is in no sense a cold, barren negative; it is, on the contrary, a hearty, truthful affirmation of all truth." What a modest, what a remarkably unassuming claim! Atheism identical with all science! Here is a royal road to learning with a vengeance! Here is a new solution of the educational question! Away with school boards! Away with school rates! Only let the people cease to believe in God, and they have at one bound the "affirmation of all truth"! But these modest claims of Mr. Bradlaugh are idle talk. Of all the "isms" of the day, atheism is simply that which doubts (though a simple doubter is not necessarily an atheist), denies, or professes ignorance of, the existence of God. Whatever its negative value, it has no pretensions to be considered as a moral guide. Having nothing to give, it gives nothing.

## CHAPTER X.

### SECULARISM AS ATHEISM.

1. *Introduction.*—When you have thus reduced Secularism to atheism, and shown that, from a really secular point of view, atheism is valueless, do you leave the question there?

Not quite. In dealing with atheism itself, I adopt the method indicated in the last section of the ninth chapter. In any other sense than atheistic agnosticism, atheism has now very few representatives. Nevertheless, I always wish to treat them as if they were numerous and powerful. In doing this, I find the most effective way is to appeal to writers in whom they have confidence.

2. *The Question stated.*—I suppose the first thing is to clear away all unessential matter?

Yes. The point is well put by Professor Newman, whom Secularists often quote. "Now, the question between us and the atheist is very simple, and goes into a short compass. In my opinion it needs no metaphysicians to mediate between us and him. The question is this: Were ancient men wrong in seeing mind in the universe? For if they were wrong, we are wrong. I seem to myself to see Mind at work in the universe as distinctly as I see it in my fellow-men. Each is a direct perception which cannot be made clearer by argumentation. It was impossible to argue with that curious sect of

ancient doubters who held that nothing beyond the existence of self was certain. If any one assert that the world is a dream, he may rest assured that we cannot refute him. Of course I cannot prove that men's actions which seem to imply purpose and mind, do not proceed from blind forces of nature. I have no inward consciousness of any mind but my own. If any one tell me that my ascription of *design* to other men has no logical demonstration, and does not deserve belief, I have to confess that it is *not* logically demonstrable, and yet I insist that it does deserve belief, at least until refuted. He may bring proof that it is false if he can, but it is useless to tell me that I cannot prove it. I do not pretend to prove that other men have minds; but I seem to myself to see it. The veracity of our *bodily* senses is not certain; they sometimes make mistakes: yet when the senses of many men concur, we accept the conclusions, and are satisfied, even though there are cases in which appearances are deceptive. So it is with the *mind*. An individual may be rash and blundering. If I, one man, form judgments which most others, who have power and advantages equal to mine, reject, it may be reasonable to suspect that my judgments are unsound. But when we believe that we see a superior Mind in the universe, and the rest of mankind with so great unanimity chime in, that some have defined man as the religious animal; the direct perception of a superior Mind is similar in kind to our direct perception of mind in other men. No doubt, in the latter case, from the sameness of our wants and instincts, we have far greater facility in tracing the course of mind, and are less in danger of mistaking the direction of design; but this does not interfere with the assertion that the process of thought is similar in the two cases. I repeat, the sole question

between us and the atheist is, whether there are or are not marks in the universe of superior Mind. What are the qualities, the power, the purposes, of the Spirit whom we discern, and whether there are many such spirits, are questions for theists among themselves with which the atheist, while he keeps to his argument, has nothing to do. I cannot but think that if the mist of metaphysics were blown aside by theists, simple-hearted working-men would be less liable to the delusion that they are advancing in wisdom by adopting the atheistic theory; and if they saw theists willing to follow truth wherever truth led, they would have less reason to give special honour to the courage which contradicts man's deep and widespread conviction that a God above us exists, blessed for ever, and the source of blessing."<sup>1</sup>

3. *The Real Character of Atheism.*—I understand. These unbelievers have really been illogical enough to hold that because they were, besides being atheists, lovers of science, therefore science and atheism are the same thing. They might as well say that because atheists like bread or beef, therefore atheism is bread or beef! That is a very curious attitude.

What they really mean is that besides being atheists, they are something else, forgetting that a like thing might be alleged of every other class of men. They feel keenly the charge of emptiness made against atheism, and it is in answering this, that they have blundered into confusing science and atheism. But what they really mean is that they are believers in nature only. Thus Mr. Holyoake maintains: "The atheist is one who says I see reason to believe in the self-existence, self-subsistence, self-action, eternity, materiality of nature, and he makes

<sup>1</sup> "Causes of Atheism," pp. 19-21.

this affirmative declaration about the world which he knows, and that nature of which he is a part.”<sup>1</sup> And with this, Mr. Bradlaugh’s view coincided.

4. *Mr. Spencer’s Answer*.—How do you deal with this?

As before, by appeal to men they trust. Here is one quotation: “When we speak of a man as self-supporting, of an apparatus as self-acting, of a tree as self-developed, our expressions, however inexact, stand for things that can be realized in thought with tolerable completeness. Our conception of the self-development of a tree is doubtless symbolic. But though we cannot really represent in consciousness the entire series of complex changes through which the tree passes, yet we can thus represent the leading features of the series; and general experience teaches us that by long-continued observation we could gain the power to realize in thought a series of changes more fully representing the actual series: that is, we know that our symbolic conception of self-development can be expanded into something like a real conception; and that it expresses, however inaccurately, an actual process in nature. But when we speak of self-existence, and, helped by the above analogies, form some vague symbolic conception of it, we delude ourselves in supposing that this symbolic conception is of the same order as the others. On joining the word *self* to the word *existence*, the force of association makes us believe we have a thought like that suggested by the compound word *self-acting*.”

5. *The Idea Expanded*.—“An endeavour to expand this symbolic conception, however, will undeceive us. In the first place, it is clear that by self-existence we especially mean an existence independent of any other: the assertion of self-existence is simply an indirect denial of

<sup>1</sup> “Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh,” p. 7.



creation. In thus excluding the idea of any antecedent cause, we necessarily exclude the idea of a beginning; for to admit the idea of a beginning—to admit that there was a time when the existence had not commenced—is to admit that its commencement was determined by something, or was caused, which is a contradiction. Self-existence, therefore, necessarily means existence without a beginning; and to form a conception of self-existence is to form a conception of existence without a beginning. Now, by no mental effort can we do this. To conceive existence through infinite past-time, implies the conception of infinite past-time, which is an impossibility. To this let us add that even were self-existence conceivable, it would not in any sense be an explanation of the universe. No one will say that the existence of an object at the present moment is made easier to understand by the discovery that it existed an hour ago, or a day ago, or a year ago; and if its existence now is not made in the least degree more comprehensible by its existence during some previous finite period of time, then no accumulation of such finite periods, even could we extend them to an infinite period, would make it more comprehensible. Thus the atheistic theory is not only absolutely unthinkable, but, even if it were thinkable, would not be a solution. The assertion that the universe is self-existent does not really carry us a step beyond the cognition of its present existence, and so leaves us with a mere re-statement of the mystery.”<sup>1</sup>

6. *Excuses for Atheism.*—Thus this theory is only atheism in another form. Nature is not the exclusive possession of a sect; it is the common inheritance of man. All that is peculiar to atheists is—atheism, non-conviction of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," pp. 30–32.

existence of God. This, however, is so obvious that there must be on the part of atheists some profound feeling which accounts for their notion that atheism is in one way or another a necessary condition of scientific thought and progress. It is not difficult, if we bear in mind the natural reaction from spiritual despotism, to account for this feeling. When the Church took upon itself to determine what was science and what was not, it seemed necessary, first of all, to challenge the authority of the Church. And when the Church answered the challenge by charges of atheism and by punishments for atheism, it need not excite surprise that atheism came to be associated with science as if it were a necessary condition of scientific thought. And in other respects there is much truth in Mr. Holyoake's statement, "The negative atheism of mere ignorance, of insensibility, of lust, and gluttony, and drunkenness, of egotism, whose talk is outrage, and whose spirit is blasphemy, this is the gross negation of God which superstition begets in its slavery, and nurtures by its terrors."<sup>1</sup> And even of the higher kinds of atheism, Professor Newman's opinion is probably historically true, "In all the most intelligent races of men, and those with whose early mind we have best acquaintance, atheism does not grow up with men's first speculations concerning the universe, but develops itself at a later stage, and, as I believe, prevalently as a reaction from errors into which Theists fall."<sup>2</sup>

7. *The Logic of the Case.*—But reaction against errors of Theism is not necessarily atheism; nor does theistic error logically justify, however naturally it may explain, atheistic unbelief!

The logical necessities could only be met by showing

<sup>1</sup> "Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh," p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> "Causes of Atheism," p. 9.

that Theism is at once false in fact and hostile to science in tendency. With the first we have already dealt; in reference to the second, the following quotation from Mr. Mill's Essay on Theism will probably have weight: "The phenomena of nature do take place according to general laws. They do originate from definite, natural antecedents. Therefore, if their ultimate origin is derived from a will, that will must have established the general laws, and willed the antecedents. If there be a Creator, His intention must have been that events should depend upon antecedents, and be produced according to fixed conditions." But my present object is not to defend Theism, and I will say no more on that point. We have seen that "Secularism" is simply atheism, that "atheism" is simply a negation, and that that negation is wholly unnecessary to our highest welfare in our present life. There are many ways in which it is hostile to that welfare, but I need not pursue that. It is enough to see that it has entirely failed to make good its objection to the governing presence of Theism in daily life.

8. *The Christian Attitude.*—"Secularism," however, touches one with such infinite sadness that I can but content myself with pointing out its hollowness without one added word of censure. Besides, insincerity and hardness in those who, truly or falsely, profess to believe in God, give only too much excuse for those who turn wearily from the Church in hope of finding refuge in something else. Argument has, I hope, its use, but it is only the living witnesses for Christ who can deal practically with the problem of a Godless life. In logic and in love, every Christian Theist ought to be a Christian saint. The measure in which we resemble Christ will always be the measure in which we disarm "Secularism."

BOOK III.

DOUBT.





## CHAPTER XI.

### DOUBT AS FAITH.

1. *Introduction.*—We are all familiar with the now common saying, “There is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds.” How far do you agree with that?

The amount of faith contained in doubt must, in the nature of the case, be a variable quantity; but that there is always some may be inferred from the meaning of the word. Were there none at all, the state of mind would be one of non-belief or disbelief, not doubt.

2. *Explanation of the Term.*—I think the poet, who has given such wide currency to the phrase, meant more than that.

Very likely. He probably intended to convey the idea that frequently faith is the cause of doubt. If so, the idea is surely true. Doubt, in this sense, may be described sometimes as transition from a lower to a higher belief; sometimes, as the perception of the non-agreement of a given doctrine or of a given form of doctrine, with a belief already reached. As to the first. Suppose a man to be feeling his way to a true theory of inspiration. He may have become dimly conscious that there is a higher doctrine than that of dictation, without having been able to go further. This dim consciousness, unable as yet to define the higher, unavoidably results in doubt, not as yet in denial, of the lower. That is what I mean by

doubt as a state of transition. As to the second. Suppose a man to have reached a condition of utter trust in the love of God. Whatever he doubts, he does not doubt that. But he perceives the impossibility of reconciling this or that form of the doctrine of eternal punishment with the Divine love. The result is doubt, not denial; for, possibly, a reconcileable form of the doctrine may yet be presented to his mind. These may serve as illustrations of doubt caused by faith.

3. *The Question stated.*—Is there not a yet deeper sense in which this holds good? Is not all honest doubt the result of faith in truth and right, and in those principles already seen to be in harmony therewith?

Yes. Were there no such faith, inquiry would be useless, or rather absurd. Taking it for granted that there are certain things already believed by all doubters, what we have to do is to ascertain how much more, on principles already recognized, they ought to believe, and also what course of conduct properly follows from this enlarged belief.

4. *Competency assumed.*—But are we really able, without Divine help, to come to any right conclusions?

That depends on what you mean. If you suppose that Divine help is given only to those who ask for it, then all argument, all explanation, is utter folly, except to those who have already faith enough to pray. But I do not so understand the matter. I think we may fairly take it for granted that the Holy Spirit is in the world in such a sense that no man, however unbelieving, is altogether excluded from His influence. Besides, is not honest seeking for the truth a kind of prayer? You would furnish evil with a terrible weapon were you to permit the unbeliever to suppose that *he* is not a responsible being,

and that he remains irresponsible so long as he remains unbelieving. But that is just what the doctrine in question practically comes to. For if a man does not yet believe sufficiently to pray, in your sense of the word, and without such prayer cannot believe at all in God and Christ, then surely we have no right to blame him for unbelief. I think that the true doctrine is that the Spirit of Christ is in every man in such a sense as to make him competent to take the first step, and in taking that, help will be given for the next.

It is, then, assumed that these are subjects on which we are able to form a rational and conscientious judgment. It will be at once evident that the inquiry is not for those who have already answered these questions, affirmatively, negatively, or despairingly. The first stands for belief, the second for disbelief, the third for the conclusion that no conclusion is possible. It is for those who are not believers, who are not disbelievers, who are not despairers, but simply doubters who are willing to embrace the intellectual and moral sequences of what they already hold. It is not for sceptics who are content to rest in scepticism. The sceptical spirit has been of much use; but that use has been the calling forth of a better belief. When there has been no soul of faith in scepticism, the good it has done must be put down to the credit of the believer, or of the inquirer, who has been willing to learn even from the most destructive enmity. The abolition of lower beliefs is conditionally serviceable. The condition is that there be substitution. The higher must take the place of the lower. One may fairly say that any belief which is conscientiously and thoughtfully held is better than none—if, indeed, the latter be practically possible. It will of course be noted that reasonable certainty is

regarded as within reach. About what is called absolute certainty I can say little. It seems rather a feeling than a conviction, and the same may be said of its opposite. I have met men who *felt* uncertain about everything, but I have never met one, and do not believe that any such exists, who was *convinced* that nothing is certain. The reason for my disbelief is this—the conviction that everything is uncertain is impossible. It involves a contradiction in terms. To be convinced that nothing is certain implies two certainties—the certainty that nothing is certain, and the certainty of the reasoning on which that judgment is founded. That again implies principles, laws, ultimate truths, which are not called in question. But reasonable certainty is as attainable here as in many branches of science. The agnosticism which will not think is rather the paralysis of despair than the conclusion of reason. It is hopelessness of arriving at any clear conviction rather than the conviction that none is possible. Another kind resembles the feeling produced in the mind of a young student who tries to grasp too much at once; or the emotion with which one hears an address crowded with unfamiliar ideas. In such cases, agnosticism is bewilderment of faculty rather than conviction of uncertainty.

5. *Common Principles.*—You hold, then, not only that there is a faith common to all inquirers, whether believers or doubters, but also, that this faith may be expressed as confidence in truth and right, and, as you say, in certain principles harmonious therewith. I feel deeply the importance of this. What are these principles?

In no case is the doubter a doubter of everything, not at least of the principle of sufficient reason; for he cannot think *that* doubt justifiable which cannot show suf-

ficient reason for its existence. As we have seen, science assumes consciousness, relation, likeness, difference, space, time, matter, motion, force. Perhaps these assumptions may be reduced to consciousness and cause. And on the scientific side of the inquiry the single idea by which one is ruled is harmony with the principle of adequate cause. In strict language there would be no need to put in the word "adequate," for what is inadequate is not, as far as it is inadequate, cause. But as experience tells us the word is really needed, let it stand. There is another thing taken for granted, the principle of righteous love. The doubter may say, "I *will* not go into endless questionings as to the origin and development of conscience, moral sense, moral law, and all the rest of it. I do not despise these things, but they are too high for me. Perhaps, if I had time enough, I could climb up. But the number of my earthly days is uncertain, and there are things of more pressing need close at hand. To me reason is the mind as conscious of relations under the aspect of truth, conscience is the mind as conscious of relations under the aspect of right. If any one choose to say truth and right are illusions, let him. I shall take care to avoid his company. If he acts on his theory, he is an evil liver; if he does not, he is an evil speaker. If any one demand a definition of truth and of right, let him get it where he can, he will not get it from me. If he asks from his heart, I am sorry for him, as I should be for the blind; if from his lips, I answer I am too busy for trifling." It cannot be said that the inquirer is unscientific in this. He perceives, as everybody else does, that whatever pain it brings, it is better to be right than to be wrong, better to love than to hate. If we put these two ideas together we get the second thing to guide our



inquiry. The first, then, is harmony with the principle of adequate cause, the second is harmony with the principle of righteous love. We may take as our third, harmony with the principle of sufficient reason interpreted as agreement with things one cannot help believing.

6. *Doubt as Other-Faith*.—Is not a great deal of so-called scepticism simply faith in something supposed to be hostile to Christianity?

That is so. One cannot but deplore the excuse for the supposition so often given, I will not say by theologians, but, at all events, by preachers. As, in society, we often meet those who are apparently unable to praise one person without dispraising another, so there are clergymen who cannot, it would seem, glorify Christianity without disparaging science. Will they *never* remember that the latter also is from God? Let us, however, consider the faith in science which leads to unfriendly criticism of Christianity.

Of course it is not within the range of science to positively disprove the Catholic Faith. As to all the elements in the common belief of Christians, science may even admit that they stand for realities greater than the doctrines they set forth. The criticism of theology by science is that the theological explanation is not large enough, and deep enough, and high enough to cover the breadth, and depth, and height of all the facts. It does not therefore blame the theologians for their efforts at explanation. It is only by constant endeavour to express, that we realize how much more than expressible these realities must ever be. But some scientific philosophers have allowed themselves to drift towards the other pole. Seeing the inadequacy of all statements concerning them, they have got into the way of thinking that no statement

is possible; but what they really mean is no adequate statement. In like manner, they have unconsciously confused apprehension and comprehension, imagining that because we could not have the latter we could not have the former; which is to say that because one cannot see the boundaries of a country he does not see the country at all. They have mixed up the notion of less than definite with the notion of more than definite, and, having given the name of knowable to the definite only, fancy that nothing else is known, which, to change the figure, is to say—because the air fills every other man's lungs as well as his own, and surrounds the earth with an invisible ocean besides, one can know nothing about it. What is really meant is quite different from this. Science is conscious that the "unknowable" fills and overflows all definition. She does not deny that the omnipresent Power is what the Catholic Church affirms; she does deny that the omnipresent Power is *as, and no more than*, she supposes the Catholic Church to mean. She maintains that her own representation is the higher of the two. As one example of the vice of theological defining, she strongly urges that to ascribe to God at once infinity and personality is to ascribe contradictory attributes, and the implication is, that as one of them must go, that one is "personality." The doubter may naturally say, I am not quite sure of that. I know better what I am talking about when I use the word "personal" than when I use the word "infinite." I am not able to see how the universe (including the world of man) can be the outcome of a Power without consciousness and will. Infinity, as an abstraction, is not consistent with personality, I grant; but neither is it consistent with anything else. Abstract infinity is the infinity of nothingness. Perhaps science and the Catholic Church do not quite

understand each other. I think I know what the latter means. It is not "infinity and personality," but God as conscious, free, and righteous Love, without other limits than He imposes on Himself. And it may be that science really means the same thing, except that it prefers to say, "The omnipresent Power is not less than this," and inclines to emphasize power rather than love.

So far you have, I think, made good your case. But do doubters really accept the principle of righteous love?

If by "accept" you mean "live" the principle, that can only be determined, in so far as it is our concern to determine it at all, by actual experience of how doubters live. Some of them manifest what I cannot but regard as a Christ-produced unselfishness that is very beautiful. If, however, you mean by "accept" do they "acknowledge" the great principle, the answer must be strongly in the affirmative. The strange thing is that they should so plainly claim it as a principle of human action, and yet hesitate to confess it as a principle of Divine action. It is, no doubt, because of the mystery of evil. I incline to think, however, that just because it is a mystery it cannot be properly used as an argument against belief in the omnipresent Power as righteous Love. Until it ceases to be a mystery it is not clear that science can use it either for or against. Were it understood, it might turn out to be a proof rather than a disproof of Love. If evil were felt to be a normal and an eternal condition, I suppose we should have to seriously modify our conception of Omnipotence. But, for my own part, I have no such feeling or conviction. Evil is a lessening quantity, and, if evolution be a fact, must finally disappear. Here comes a possible difficulty with the Church. It is true that the Catholic Faith says nothing about the

eternity of evil, unless we interpret as literal the second of two phrases in the Athanasian Creed. To "perish everlastingly," if taken literally, presents no fatal difficulty; what has perished for ever cannot last for ever. But if by "everlasting fire" is meant a fire that endures for ever, then, of course, the clergy, who alone are bound to subscribe the Athanasian Creed, must either except that clause, or declare their assent to the "eternity of evil." Happily, laymen are not required to believe that, but it is unpleasant to have teachers who are. It might be said, no clergyman who dissented from that clause would on that account be regarded as no longer Catholic. In that case, would it not be well to have it expunged? There is no such phrase in the Apostles' Creed, which is meant to be binding on all the baptized; there is none in the Nicene Creed, intended for all communicants. As it is not connected with either of the two great sacraments, it is doubtful if the Athanasian Creed ought to be regarded as essential even to the clerical confession of faith. It is difficult to see why the clergy should, in a matter like this, be called upon to believe what is not required from the laity. The only point at present, however, is the meaning of "everlasting fire." I am told it means here what it means in the Bible. We shall come to that by-and-by. Meanwhile, if it can be interpreted as everlasting until its work is done, until it has burned up whatever is to be burned, and then—then only burns itself out, the Catholic Faith does not teach the eternity of evil. No doubt, the difficulty is great of accounting for evil at all; but every one feels its existence to be a comparatively small stumbling-block if we may believe in its gradual evanescence. Besides, though evil may rear itself against the idea of perfect goodness, the idea,



or feeling, or intuition, or conviction, or fundamental belief, or whatever may be the best name for it, and however it came, through whatever process of successive modifications, *exists, and is authoritative*, and that is sufficient for practical purposes.

7. *Faith in Law*.—Is there any other point you wish to specify?

There is, also, I think, a needless difficulty about law; as if it were, or ever could be, a substitute for God, either as the not less than conscious, free, and righteous Love of the Church, or as the not less than omnipresent Power of science. As to the latter, only a few words need be said. Science, however ambiguous its teachers may sometimes be, as for example, Wallace, in his phrase "creation by law," never makes the blunder of really confusing law and force. It observes that like causes have like effects, which is expressed by "invariable sequence;" it perceives that the ways of energy are regular, and speaks of this as uniformity of law. Science registers the observed modes of the omnipresent Power's manifestations. Besides this, as the omnipresent Power is persistent, it foresees certain results which must follow, and this is set forth in the formula of evolution. So far, I see nothing necessarily hostile to the Catholic conception of God. The difficulty arises when we reach the Catholic conception of man. To the whole Church man is, within limits, a free and responsible being. The spiritual man is conscious, free, and righteous love, and therein resembles God as truly as the finite *can* resemble the infinite. As we have already seen, there is in man a consciousness which is indefinite in the sense of more than definite, possibly it is the consciousness of being as being. It may be that this resembles the supposed



absolute consciousness of God. God, according to the Church, has, of His own will, entered into limitation, voluntarily subjected Himself to act by law. The reason she does not know, the fact she thinks she does know. She holds that man is, without regard to his will, subjected to law, but yet so that he may choose to act in a great variety of modes because energies are many, and may be turned now in this way, now in that, according to the power of the man, acting in harmony with these laws. I have said, his freedom is within limits. It may be that I ought not to say that. Whether his freedom be limited or not, his power certainly is. He may turn a hundred ways but he cannot go further in any of them than he has strength to go. Yet, according to the Church, he resembles God in this, that he can impose limitations upon himself; or, at least, he can choose between limitations. He can choose righteousness, and turn away from iniquity. If he cannot make himself good, he can choose to be made good. He can will to obey, and find, in obedience, blessedness. He can be so changed from glory to glory, that, at last, he will be always spontaneously right without effort. He cannot definitely grasp the eternal purpose of perfect Love, but he can become one with the love and so fulfil the purpose. That is the Catholic conception of man. It cannot be truly said that science really contradicts this conception. But as its business is to emphasize the way will works instead of the will itself, the latter is sometimes in peril of being hidden by the constantly increasing mass of observations concerning the former. And it cannot be denied that a certain number of men, otherwise scientific, are inclined to regard man as simply a partly conscious, partly unconscious automaton. What looks like self-determining

action is really owing to causes beneath consciousness. Hence the illusion of free will. The controversy raises the question, Has God made man in His own image or not? If He has, then man must be regarded as a being capable of directing force; capable to a certain extent of self-direction, of self-government. That we are thus capable is not, in each man, a belief; it is a consciousness, a part of self-consciousness. I note that they who assert automatonism manifest, notwithstanding their assertion, this consciousness as much as other men. Every one does practically admit that there is such a thing as voluntary conduct. That is enough. Let the Church be careful to show that whatever course a man takes he takes therewith inevitable consequences, and she may rest assured science can find no fault. It is true that, in theory, there will still be a difficulty. One cannot see how there can be direction of force without expenditure of force. The expenditure may be comparatively infinitesimal, like the slight stroke in air of a bird's wing that yet disturbs an avalanche in a state of unstable equilibrium, and sends it thundering and crashing into the valley below. But if infinitesimal, it is still real, and adds something to the existing sum total of energy; a conclusion which would upset one of the most cherished, perhaps most necessary, theories of modern science. The doctrine of the conservation of energy, or persistence of force, will not admit that the sum total can be either increased or diminished; more accurately, as far as experiment is concerned, that it *is* increased or diminished. But the fact remains, whatever the explanation. I do not feel that my consciousness of the external world either increases or diminishes the quantity of existence. It may be that when the relation of spirit to matter is better understood, we

shall be able to see that the will's direction of thought, feeling, action, does *not* involve either increase or diminution of force as known by the man of science. In any case, as I have said, the fact remains. Practically, therefore, it would be as erroneous scientifically, as it would be monstrous morally, to deny that man has self-directing power. The difficulty will come up again, but not from the side of science.

8. *Faith in the Method of Science.*—Is it not a common idea among sceptics that the *method*, quite as much as the *results*, of science is hostile to Christianity?

The feeling is very general. I have often heard such statements as the following. We have been trained, says the doubter, in an atmosphere different from yours, and I am not sure that you apprehend rightly the result. We are accustomed to look for a kind and degree of evidence which you do not seem to think necessary, and when we seek to apply to the New Testament and to the Catholic Faith the canons of investigation with which I am familiar, I find myself sorely perplexed. I do not even know to what extent you will grant that I am justified in applying these canons at all; for example, how much is to be taken on faith, that is, without evidence scientifically adequate; how much is dependent on acknowledged rules of testimony, and logical inference therefrom. If you were to say that I am bound to believe whatsoever the whole Church agrees in teaching as of the Catholic Faith, and I were willing to listen to that contention, ought I not first of all to satisfy myself of the competency of the Church to decide? We know that the whole world has been mistaken as to the shape of the earth, its place in the universe, its interpretation of the heavens, and a good many other things. Why should I

consider it impossible for the whole Church to be mistaken in anything it regards as of the faith? In order to share her confidence in herself, I desire to be clearly informed as to the ways in which she reaches her conclusions. It is surely not too much to ask to see plainly her method, and to be allowed to compare it with the one to which I am accustomed.

Again: It will hardly serve our purpose to go into the question of canonicity. That is a point about which we care very little. Whether the New Testament books were "generally *received*" in the first century or the second, the third or the fourth, does not show whether they are true or not. The failure of the mythical theory to prove the books of the New Testament false, does not prove them true. I confess that, for my own part, I have failed to discover any historic proof that they are false. There seems no trace of the kind of gradual deification of Christ, or the gradual supernaturalization of His actions and atmosphere, which the mythical theory requires. His Divine Nature and His resurrection seem to me plainly taught, perhaps, even more plainly implied, in the four epistles about whose authorship and date eminent sceptics appear to have no doubt; namely, Romans, Galatians, First and Second Corinthians. These, at least, belong to the first century and were, apparently, written within thirty years of the date of the crucifixion. So much seems as certain as anything in history; and this satisfies, one has some difficulty in understanding why, many genuine scholars. But this very fact constitutes one of our difficulties. To take it for granted that the New Testament is true because history has not proved it false, is not what we are accustomed to regard as a scientific way of looking at things. We are content to



assume that the New Testament is not a forgery, is not a gradual growth, is not seriously corrupted, is, in fact, an honestly written account of what the writers, whoever they were, really believed. But we are not, therefore, bound to hold that they believed, in all points, rightly. Nor is it possible, continues the doubter, to reconcile ourselves, without violence to our usual rules of investigation, to the position so often taken by evidentialists. They show the truth of certain statements in the New Testament, and leave it to be inferred that everything else the book contains is true also. This, however, is not the scientific method. If we find that, in a large number of test cases, an ancient author has turned out to be more accurate than he was once thought to be, a presumption, nothing more, is established that he will be probably right in similar cases not yet, or not such as can be, tested. But there is not even a presumption in favour of dissimilar cases. Then, what shall we say of the kind of argument which insists on our taking the New Testament as a whole, or not taking it at all? I know that many have, to save themselves trouble, accepted that way of putting it, and have decided in favour of the second clause of the alternative. Professor Huxley seems rather fond of that kind of dilemma, except that he turns the tables on his opponents. "All is true, or none is," is their way; "If one is false, all is," is his retort courteous. The story of the flood is manifestly false, therefore nothing in the Bible is true! How this clear-sighted man of science must laugh in his sleeve. But the matter is too important to be treated in that fashion. Quietly and seriously, I ask, Are we to believe Herodotus because Thucydides has been found trustworthy? Even suppose, which, as yet, we see no ground for admitting, that S. Paul is



credible in everything he said, is that scientific ground for believing everything S. Peter said? Or, were it demonstrated that S. Luke is worthy of belief, are we therefore to credit the Gospel of John? Surely it is reasonable to ask why we are not to treat the New Testament as a little library of books, each one of which is to be studied and judged according to its own nature, merits, and claims. If we are to depart from this method, it is right to ask for adequate scientific reasons for the departure.

If any agreement is to be reached, he still further urges, each side must endeavour to understand the other. There has been an immense amount of confident assertion and equally confident denial. There has been exultant triumph of believers and equally exultant triumph of disbelievers. There has been, also, much courteous consideration (rather perhaps on the part of scholars of the first rank than on the part of disbelievers) on both sides. But there is yet little understanding. Little as it is, there is more with respect to disbelievers than with respect to doubters. It is easier to many to "tolerate" a man who is out and out an opponent than one who seems to be sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. It is to them intelligible that they who profess to reject Christianity should profess also to accept, as exclusive, the mechanical theory of the universe; but they find it difficult to understand a man who is neither a fatalist nor a Christian. It is, I grant, less difficult for one who believes in "free will," however limited, to believe also in "miracles" and answers to prayer, than for one who holds the automaton theory. Nevertheless, admission of free will as real does not necessarily involve admission of miracles as facts. Whether these have actually occurred or not is plainly a

question of evidence; and the first point to be settled is what kind and degree of evidence ought to be deemed sufficient. Moreover, to the man of science it is absurd to contend that because some miracles are granted, we are on that account alone, to grant all the rest. Of course every one sees that if it can be proved that some were wrought, it is less difficult to believe that others were. But it is a long stride from the admission that an event is credible to the admission that it actually took place. Then one may admit the moral beauty of much the New Testament contains without being scientifically justified in approving all its teaching. The balance of probability would, even before opening the book, seem to be that one would very often find himself agreeing, disagreeing, hesitating, suspending judgment, in a way sufficiently irritating to headlong extremists. What is thus probable beforehand, becomes absolutely certain when the scientific inquirer studies the New Testament, and especially when he compares it with his experience of the Church and the world as they are to-day. It is just this kind of morally thoughtful scientific doubt which it behoves theologians to thoroughly master. However sure they are of their own position, they cannot fail to profit by learning the kind and force of difficulties arising from such study as this. Clear as the answers are to themselves, they, too, must wonder why they are not equally clear to others. Even if the reason be ignorance, it is well to remember that if there were no ignorance there would be no need of scholars. As long as any class can be truly so described, the many must be less learned than themselves. And knowledge is not rightly regarded as intellectual millionairism for the pleasure of the possessor, but as a trust to be administered for the profit of all. He who,

having all knowledge, and not having love, is content to point the finger of scorn at ignorance, is a "bloated aristocrat" of the intellectual order of less real dignity than a hedge schoolmaster. Besides, the true scholar most of all wants to know precisely those points in which others are ignorant, that he may not waste his time in accumulating proof where no more is needed, or in heaping up explanation where that already given is sufficient.

How do you answer all this? It is difficult to find much fault, is it not?

I think the doubter is mistaken as to the extent to which we ignore the scientific method. Our best theologians are eminently scientific, perhaps more than they themselves have realized. In so far, however, as the doubter's criticism is just, the only possible answer is to mend our ways. Let him, in his turn, remember that the method of science must be the method of truth, and must take into account all phenomena whether "material" or "spiritual," and that to raise questions such as these does not exhaust the inquirer's duty. On the contrary, they but refer to obstacles which, though they may irritate his spirit, are no excuse for abandoning study. What he is bound to do, if he would be loyal to that very method of science which he professes to follow, is to earnestly inquire how far loyalty to what he already sees to be true involves the reception of other things whose truth he had not previously seen. For this, his doubt, as faith in the method of science, is a good starting-point.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DOUBT AS LIMITATION OF FAITH.

1. *Introduction.*—You seem to hold that the question is not so much one of belief and unbelief as it is one of belief and other-belief?

Yes, I hold that strongly. Unbelief is a kind of shadow thrown by belief, and the shadow will vary according to the angle at which the belief is brought into the light. Thus atheism is the shadow of belief in the universe, agnosticism the shadow of belief in an omnipresent Power, unitarianism the shadow of belief in God, individualism<sup>1</sup> the shadow of belief in Christ. What the atheist means is that his faith is limited to the universe; what the agnostic means is that his faith is limited to the universe *and* the omnipresent Power whose manifestation it is; what the unitarian means is that his faith is limited to the universe as the manifestation of the omnipresent Power interpreted as God; what the individualist means is that his faith is limited to God in Christ. The only right way of dealing with the subject is not by denunciation, but by explanation. Put belief in the universe in the right light and the omnipresent Power appears, atheism disappears; put belief in the omnipresent Power in the right light and God appears, agnosticism disappears; put

<sup>1</sup> By individualism is meant ultra-Protestantism; by individualist, ultra-Protestant.

belief in God in the right light and the Triune Deity appears, unitarianism disappears; put belief in Christ in the right light and the Catholic Church appears, individualism disappears.

2. *Limitation as Indifference.*—I am grateful to you for that statement. What, however, would you say of those who are without interest in the subject?

The problem of indifference is one of the most difficult, as it is one of the most important, in the whole range of moral inquiry. But it hardly comes under the heading either of "precipitated unbelief," or of "scepticism in solution," of "secularism," or of "doubt." Disbelievers have, at least, a hostile interest in the subject, sceptics an interest that wavers between hostility and love. Nevertheless, the indifferent must be classed among the non-believing, even though the classification include numbers of nominal Christians. He whose interest in Him is not supreme—high above all other interests—is not, in the ethical sense of the word, a believer in Christ. Of course, in all such cases, the belief has some other object, oftenest, perhaps, self, interpreted in a low sense. But, to avoid repetition, let it be understood that believer stands for one who believes, trusts, loves, and obeys Jesus Christ; and unbeliever for one who does not believe, trust, love, and obey Him. The only limitation I need add is one that will occur to everybody. No man is perfect in belief, or in trust, or in love, or in obedience. But the believer must not knowingly and wilfully fail in *any* of these. If he does, to the extent of his failure he ceases to be a believer, and becomes an unbeliever. No one's interest in Christ is perfect; but the man who is uninterested in Him is as really an unbeliever as is the man whose interest is hostile. I do not, of course, refer to the



cases where uninterest is simply the accompaniment of unavoidable ignorance, as among the "heathen" abroad and the overtasked at home; *i.e.* those whose whole mental energy is necessarily absorbed in providing for the wants of the body. That there are large numbers, though not so large as some suppose, included in this class seems unhappily true. But that indifference, except in the cases named, is inexcusably unscientific is so manifest that any attempt to prove it would seem absurd. For, in its very nature, indifference is an atmosphere as fatal to science as is carbonic acid gas to animal life.

3. *The Plea for Limitation.*—You will, however, admit that it cannot be the duty of every one to inquire into everything contained, or supposed to be contained, within the limits of the Christian faith?

I am glad you have asked that question. The first thing is to listen to the plea for limitation presented by the earnest doubter who believes in God, but does not see his way to the acceptance of Christianity, at least as ordinarily understood.

I raise no question as to the genuineness of the New Testament. I do not, for the purpose of this inquiry, he says, concern myself much with any teaching but Christ's. I do not forget that my right to do this will be challenged. It will be said "all the books of the New Testament are equally authoritative." Well, that is a terrible position. If S. Paul, for example, is of equal authority with Jesus Christ, the doubter may well abandon Christianity in despair, not because he is certain that S. Paul contradicts Jesus Christ, but because life is too short to find out whether he does or not. If I am allowed simply to put aside everything in S. Paul's writings that does not seem in harmony with Christ's teaching, accepting all that does,

I do not give up the hope of being a Christian. But if for that I must wait until I can reconcile everything S. Paul wrote, or is believed to have written, with Christ's revelation of God as Righteous Love, I shall probably die before the reconciliation is found. Nor is this all. They who hold the view of inspiration to which I refer maintain that I must accept the whole Bible as the word of God. Now, I do not even raise the question whether the view required is true or not. That is not my point. There are difficulties enough, though not, I hope, insuperable, in the four Gospels, and these are quite sufficient to occupy all the time I can give to the subject. But what am I to do if to these I must add those of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, the Apocalypse, and all the books of the Old Testament? If that be really the alternative, the only thing to be done is to close the Bible, and never open it again. It is only fair to say that the Catholic Church does not impose upon me any such impossible task, though whether she would permit me the whole freedom I claim is open to doubt. Yet anything less would not serve. It is that I be allowed to examine carefully the teaching of Christ to ascertain if, as I think, the conception of God as Righteous Love is His, and if I find it is, to regard whatever does not agree therewith, whether in the Gospels or in any other part of the Bible, as not in any way binding on me or as necessary, in any sense, to my salvation. It may be said that the mistake, if any there be, may be mine, not the Bible's. That I do not deny. But what is the use of inquiry, if I must take it for granted beforehand there is no mistake? And I hold that it is utterly unreasonable to require me to study, concerning the whole Bible, whether there is any error within its sacred pages or not. I repeat, life is not long enough for

that. I shall therefore content myself with the New Testament, and in the New Testament mainly with the Gospels. Adhering to Christ's fundamental conception, if His it be, of God as righteous love, I shall test everything else in Gospel or Epistle by that; and whatever seems, and so long as it seems, inconsistent therewith, I shall put on one side. In short, if I find all His teaching consistent with His great principle, I shall regard Christ as the one supreme authority, and shall permit no shadow, whether of prophet or apostle, to come between Him and me. For example, S. Paul's doctrines of predestination and faith do not appear to be in harmony with the spirit of Christ's teaching, and must therefore be put aside.

4. *Defence of the Plea.*—This is to me a somewhat startling position. Is it justifiable?

Let us again listen to the doubter.

This course, he says, will not to some seem clearly right; to others it will seem clearly wrong. To refuse to treat the Bible as a house so curiously constructed on pillars that if one gives way the entire building must tumble to the ground, will be unjustifiable in the eyes of large numbers both of believers and of disbelievers. Those who are wholly for, and those who are wholly against the Bible, are very likely to turn their weapons on any one who does not altogether agree with either. But even among these there will still be some who are willing to listen to a doubter's defence of limitation. To these will not be presented in vain the plea of insufficient time, in the possible sixty years of a doubter's life, to examine adequately the vast and varied literature called the Bible, with all the necessary apparatus of Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin; of lexicon, grammar, and history; of English, and French, and German commentaries; of works on

evidences, treating of historical truth, inward experience, and external congruities; of relation to other branches of study, such as moral, metaphysical, and scientific philosophy, and of agreement or disagreement with the discoveries of modern science; of books on the practical conduct of life, from the personal, the family, the social, the economic, the judicial, the political, and the international points of view. They will remember, too, that the doubter has no guarantee that he will not be cut down before a single year of study has past. If Christianity be necessary to salvation at all, one must surely seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and let all these things be added as occasion comes. It may be that Christianity is not necessary, but that Christ is. To the study of Christ, then, must the doubter give himself. If this be not granted, it is useless to ask him to inquire at all.

5. *The Study of Christ.*—But can one be justified in examining the claims of Christ? If we give up apostle and prophet to the doubter's cross-examination, surely we must draw the line there?

Let the doubter himself answer. To many, however, of those who are ready to grant my contention on this point, doubt concerning Christ Himself will seem not only unjustifiable, but even infamous. I do not wonder at the feeling. On one point, indeed, I entirely share the emotion the proposed inquiry calls forth. To doubt Christ does appear to me like doubting truth, right, beauty, good; doubting the very principle of righteous love by which we have agreed to be bound, and which seems so completely *His* principle that it is hardly possible to think of it without thinking of Him. Nevertheless, I do not see that the doubter is compelled to take it for granted, at



the outset of his study, that Christ was always, and in every detail, consistent with Himself. It is not impossible that I may end, but I cannot be rightly expected to begin, with that conclusion. Even had I already satisfied myself as to its general truth, it does not follow that I must accept everything attributed to Him in the four Gospels, any more than I must accept every inference drawn from His character and teaching, or from the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, by the apostles and the Church. To require this would be to reimpose all the stupendous hindrances already abandoned.

Take one example of the doubter's difficulty. Professor Sanday admits that the fourth Gospel must be taken *cum grano salis*. It was, he thinks, unconsciously coloured by the changed condition of the writer. The events occurred when he was young; the story was written when he was old. He wrote as he saw through the haze of fifty intervening years. It does not follow that the story is not substantially true; it does follow as, at least, an exceedingly great probability, that it is not true in all its details. If the theory of infallible direction be held in a sense that excludes the possibility of the writers putting down anything that God did not intend them to put down, we are, of course, driven to one of two conclusions. Either the Bible contains no error, which, from a scientific point of view, is incredible, or else God, if He did not inspire, intentionally permitted, error, which, though credible enough to the student of science, is regarded with horror by no small number of Christians. If the former be taken as the true theory, then the doubter must wander in darkness and solitude as best he may until the grave hides him from the suspicious eyes, and lapse of time from the vengeful memory, of Christian men.



The sincere doubter will not go to his death with a lie on his lips. To him it is impossible to say the Bible is everywhere and in all details a revelation of righteous love. If the latter of the two theories be true, then there can be no reason why he should not inquire if the possibility of error extends to the synoptic Gospels. In this case, the doubter will have to make up his mind whether the error, if such there be, was in the words of the speaker or in the words of the reporter. If the pious thinker still regards as wrong the proposal to examine the teaching of Christ, in the light of the principle of righteous love, I ask him to remember that to the doubter the only alternative is agnosticism; in the sense of inability to know, because of the prohibition of inquiry; inability to believe, because the evidence is withheld from examination.

6. *Reverent Study*.—But surely one must approach the subject in the spirit of humility and reverence?

Let the doubter once more speak for himself. That the subject cannot be rightly approached except in a reverent spirit I gladly acknowledge. But reverence is a moral quality, and it is a moral principle by which I wish to be guided in the inquiry. I may be told I ought to receive the teaching of Christ with the humility of a child. But is that principle to be taken without qualification? A child might, indeed, have such utter trust that he would believe whatever the father said; and the child would be justified if the father were perfect. But no one will extend that to what others say in the father's name. I admit at once that, notwithstanding some external grounds of questioning, I ought to accept whatever the Divine Father says. It is just because I do accept what the Father says in the supreme principle of righteous love that I must inquire whether whatever is said in the

Father's Name is in harmony therewith. It may be that I shall see no escape from the conclusion that Jesus Christ was, indeed, "Eternal Son of God." But if I must take that for granted, it is not a conclusion, and I have no evidence by which to justify belief. Even so, I should still have to ask, as we have seen, whether He was, in every case, rightly reported.

7. *Defence of the Study.*—But if the inquiry is to be limited to Christ, surely many things must be taken for granted!

He answers: I very willingly admit that. One of the most necessary things is to distinguish between what is to be assumed and what is not. It might be shown that all the sciences assume one science which is common to all. It might be shown that that one science is justified by principles which cannot be proved, because, without them, proof there could not be. I may, perhaps, admit that there is an "intuition" of God which renders proof superfluous; and that this is the intuition of Him as not less than conscious, free, and righteous Love. But no one, I think, will contend that the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh, His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, as facts of history, are questions to be settled by "intuition" alone. All that He was and did may turn out to be in harmony with the intuition of God, but in order to be sure of that, the inquiry must be made. To some I shall appear to dwell on this with weary iteration. But, perhaps, they do not know as well as I how much iteration is necessary to make the average Christian understand the doubter's position in this matter. His very reverence for God forbids him to accept anything *as from God* without adequate evidence. It is reverent doubt the Christian is most concerned to meet. He cannot turn

that aside by cries of "Blasphemy!" for there can be no blasphemy where none is meant; where, on the contrary, reverence for righteousness prompts the doubt.

8. *The Obligation to Faith.*—I do not see my way to deny the doubter's contention, yet it seems to me one full of peril. Something there must be that he has not stated; something which, were it stated, would, perhaps, supply the need I feel?

There is just one thing necessary with a doubter like this. Ignoring, for the time being, what he does not believe, let him be pressed, with a severity that is full of kindness, to carry out all the logical and moral consequences of what he *does* believe. The obligation to believe includes much besides assent to propositions perceived to be true, and the inquiry what further beliefs these necessitate. It includes also the adjustment of one's thoughts, feelings, volitions, actions, to the belief conscientiously held. To believe in God, to believe in Christ, is to act on the belief. If God, despite all appearances, is regarded as Righteous Love, if Christ, with whatever deductions, is regarded as the incarnation of Righteous Love, then it is at the peril of his salvation if the inquirer goes no further than intellectual assent. He is bound to endeavour, by all means in his power, to feel, think, will, act, in harmony with the truth perceived. The only way in which he can really know whether he ought to believe more is to give the fullest effect to what he already believes. It is impossible for any man to realize what sin means except as he strives to live according to his sense of what is due to God and man. The consciousness of guilt cannot be fully awake in the heart of him who makes no effort to be holy. And until he strives to obey Christ the Lord, he cannot realize his need of Christ the Saviour.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DOUBT AS INQUIRY.

1. *Introduction.*—If I understand you rightly, you do not question the inquirer's title, but only insist, in the name of truth and right, that the inquiry shall be, at all points, rational and conscientious. But is there not another question beside that of title? That of wisdom and usefulness, for example?

Decidedly. One is surely bound to show what may be called the practical sense, and especially the sense of proportion, in all such inquiries. But this, I think, is implied in what I have already said as to the inquirer's duty. The recognition of obligation to be loyal to truth on all its sides, and to give most effect to that which is most important, is the keynote of all studies in religion. No other method can pretend to be scientific.

2. *The Obligation to Inquire.*—But why cannot men content themselves with the universal Christian Faith? or, in other words, what need is there that every man should inquire for himself?

If Christianity is to be regarded as true, it must be so regarded either without evidence, or with evidence tested by the principles of adequate cause, righteous love, and sufficient reason. Your question means, I suppose, that it might be accepted without evidence; *i.e.* without doubt, the implication being that, where there is no doubt, no evidence is necessary?



I am not sure that I should put it exactly in that way. But surely it might be received as most of us receive our "science," just as we are taught it at home, in school, in college, by conversation, by reading?

I admit that that method is not manifestly wrong, and if there were no ground for thinking our teachers mistaken it would not be easy to make out a case against it. I grant that those who have "difficulties," may well consider first of all whether they are of a sort to make further inquiry necessary. If, on the whole, you are satisfied that your teachers, parents, schoolmasters, professors, friends, the great scholars, the great churchmen, the great heroes of the Christian Faith, the great leaders in Christian goodness, were less likely to be mistaken than you, then you have strong reason for remaining a Christian, no matter in what manner you became one, even if your difficulties are not removed. But in order to keep that reason good you must distinguish that Christianity which is common to all from that which is peculiar to each. For example, the reason given would not, of itself, warrant you in becoming or remaining a Calvinist or an Arminian, a Roman, an Eastern, an Anglican, or a Nonconformist, Catholic; it would only justify your holding fast to that Christianity which is common to them all. If you looked into this you would, I dare say, find, first, more agreement than perhaps you expected, and, next, that many things once supposed necessary to salvation were now regarded as open questions. On the one hand, you might conclude that all those I have named are as much agreed touching the great doctrines of Christianity as are scientific men touching the great theories of science; as, for example, the Existence of God, the Divine Attributes, the Blessed Trinity,



the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, the Ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Obligation to Christlike Conduct, the Providential Government of the World, the Certainty of Future Life, Rewards, and Punishments, the Historic Truth of the New Testament, the Revelation of God, the Inspiration of the Bible, and the Supreme Authority of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, you might infer that you were free to fashion for yourself the forms into which you thought it right to throw your special views of inspiration, of future rewards and punishments, of the Atonement, of justification, and of many things besides, so long as they did not contradict the essential doctrines held in common. In other words, the reason given for remaining a Christian would hold good for the Catholic Faith, but not for departures from that faith, nor for any convictions that are not *it*, though they might be consistent with it. There is a certain amount of antecedent improbability of all the world of Christians (Unitarians excepted) being in error as to the certainty of those things which they believe in common; and those whom this evidence satisfies might be left in peace. This, however, *is* evidence, whether adequate or not.

3. *Inadequacy of Authority.*—You say “whether adequate or not.” Do you, then, doubt its adequacy?

The truth of the Catholic Faith, no; obedience to the Catholic Church, no; the adequacy of Catholic authority, yes. It would be more accurate to say that I deny than that I doubt. It is another question whether it ought to be adequate; as a matter of fact it is not. Whatever its value for believers, it can have no influence on doubters except in the way already indicated—the improbability of the universal faith being erroneous. But as against this, the divisions without end into sects and parties, and the

interminable controversies about the Bible, greatly obscure the question, and even raise a suspicion that there is no universal faith. In any case, the inquirer must see that the claimed authority is itself justifiable, and this he cannot do without appeal to the principles already laid down.

4. *The Starting Point.*—I assume, then, that you have in view, at present, inquirers into the claims of Christ?

Yes. I have, of course, already dealt with the questions of secularism, atheism, and agnosticism. But it is to be noted that there is much that the higher sceptics have themselves abandoned. No doubt some discredited theories still linger among less educated doubters, such as those of priestly invention, forgery, and the like; but one rarely hears them now from the lips of culture. Indeed the mythical theory itself is no longer presented with anything like the old confidence. I know that some sceptics themselves used to be puzzled by the extreme anxiety of certain scholars to push the dates of the Gospels out of the first into the second century, and to get them as near to the end of that century as possible. For they could not see how in the absence of any evidence of the *growth* of the supposed myth, it mattered much when the Gospels were composed. But when it was found, as we have seen, that those Epistles of S. Paul which sceptical scholars admit to be genuine, and which were written within thirty years of the death of Christ, contained those very elements of the supernatural to account for which the mythical theory required the lapse of a hundred and fifty years before the Gospels were written, it was felt by the higher sceptics themselves that they could no longer present that theory as a ground for unbelief in Christ. There remains the

theory of credulous enthusiasm and unconscious exaggeration. Let any sane man after carefully, thoughtfully, slowly, reading and re-reading the Gospels, ask himself, Can this theory account for Christ? There is no evidence to support the theory; it is without parallel in the history of the world. No "exaggeration," however unconscious, no credulity, however enthusiastic, or enthusiasm, however credulous, can account for the Christ of the Gospels. I have met with sceptics who thought they could believe that, until they had studied Christ for themselves. I have not met one who retained that opinion *after* patient and careful reading and re-reading of the Gospels. I do not go into questions of minute scholarship, because the one issue alone concerns us here. Great is the folly of parents and religious teachers in not telling the young the whole story of the Bible, its human side, its text, its manuscripts, its translations, and the like. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that unbelieving scholarship has made no discovery of a theory which adequately accounts for Christ.

5. *The Inertia of "Naturalism."*—The first question would be that of miracles and answer to prayer. But is there not a great disinclination, on the part of many, to so much as inquire into the subject?

That is true. But listen again to the doubter. Long experience has led me to the conclusion that much of the unbelief which is said to obtain largely among men of science is nothing more than the *inertia* of habit. They are steeped in "naturalism," and to pass into any other region would require an effort which they are not disposed to make. The same experience convinces me that very few men of science who are also sceptics have ever adequately studied the evidence for what is called the

supernatural in the Gospels; and that very many have not studied that evidence at all. Ordinary unbelievers are much more ready, however, to appeal to science as against what is called the supernatural than are the more thoughtful men of science themselves. Thus, while thousands are still repeating the cry that miracles are impossible, Professor Huxley has emphatically disowned the statement. I have said "what is called the supernatural," because I decline utterly to allow that miracles (and answers to prayer) are outside of the "Natural" Order. Unbelievers may fight over that if they will; all I, as a Christian, care for, is whether Jesus was, said, and did what the Gospels tell us He was, said, and did. When men of science like Professor Huxley abandon the theory of impossibility, it is useless to dwell longer on the subject. But, then, there is really nothing left except to ask, Is the testimony of the Gospels sufficient? Some, neglecting the word, wish to take each deed separately, without reference to the character of the doer, and subject it to so-called scientific tests. But that proposal is itself unscientific, for the character of the doer is an essential element in the problem. If it were shown that what Christ spoke and did were the natural outcome of what Christ was, the main point would be met.

How, then, would you answer such a doubter as this?

My reply is, Perhaps, to account for Christ without the miraculous would be itself the greatest miracle of all. In any case, there is the story. Account for it adequately without the miracles of the life, the word, the deed, if you can. If you cannot, ought you not to confess your unbelief unscientific? At all events, once it is admitted that "miracles" are possible, materialism may go back to its



laboratory. It has no more to say, the question has passed beyond its range.

6. *The Inquirer's Aim.*—You have no approval for the disposition to evaporate doctrine into sentiment?

Let the doubter answer for himself. I value sentiment as I value the air, and doctrine as I value the earth. Inquiry at least hopes for definite conclusions. Mr. Matthew Arnold said much against the theologian's proclivities for definition, and said it, to a large extent, justly. But I greatly doubt whether any theologian's definition of God could rival in hardness that given by Mr. Arnold. The not-ourselves that makes for righteousness may be merely a stream of tendency in the universe itself. But how, in this case, Theism is to be distinguished from atheism I do not know. Or if, on one hand, it be a *power* that makes for righteousness, is it simply one of the many forces with which science deals? But in this case it is only one of many in the universe, and again it is difficult to see how such Theism differs from atheism. If, on the other hand, the power that makes for righteousness be identical with the not less than omnipresent Power manifest in all phenomena, the not less than conscious, free, and righteous Love without other limits than He imposes on Himself, then no more need be said. We have a definite principle of judgment and of conduct. Whatever is harmonious with righteous love, that do; whatever is not, that do not. If I were to differ from Mr. Arnold's description of religion as morality heightened by emotion, it would be in giving the soul something else to contemplate than a stream of tendency. Love wakens love, and I can hardly conceive of its being wakened, or kept awake, by the contemplation of a tendency. But I can conceive nothing more likely to keep man straight than his consciousness of



God's love, and of that love as righteous. The doubts one feels have no reference to that. Whether literature can content itself with Mr. Arnold's description may be questionable; the scientific doubter cannot. What one does doubt is whether the New Testament and Catholic Christianity are or are not faithful to the conception of God as not less than righteous love.

7. *Two Types of Agnostics.*—It is evident there must be more than one kind of agnostics—I took it for granted they had given up inquiry?

Many of them have. Said one, "I never discuss the subject, or even talk about it." Said another, "I am satisfied that no book you can send me will make any difference." Twenty, fifteen, ten years ago unbelievers were eager for discussion. To-day they attend lectures, even where questions are invited, in greatly diminished numbers, and, apparently, rather from the hope of getting an "intellectual treat" than from interest in the subject. It would almost seem as if the *mot d'ordre* had gone forth, "No more discussion!" Lectures on Christian evidences are, perhaps, better attended than ever; but those who go are for the most part of two classes, Christians who seek confirmation of their faith, and doubters who wish to believe. Some agnostics do not seem to have any wish of the kind; the old earnestness, such as made Mr. Bradlaugh a power, seems to be dying out. Call it indifference, call it despair, call it cynicism, it is a melancholy spectacle. But whether cynical, despairing, or indifferent, this agnosticism is confessedly unscientific. How, indeed, could the attitude of an unbelieving deaf mute be anything else? An earnest agnostic turns from it in disdain. There is one comfort. As I have said elsewhere, if the theory of evolution be true, it cannot last. Unbelief has

passed through every possible form, and has finally reached in silent agnosticism a terminus. But movement there must be, and the only movement possible is in the direction of Christ. Nevertheless, there are many agnostic doubters of another type. Perhaps these really earnest inquirers might take for their motto, "There is much we do not yet know, but we hope to know."

How do you reconcile your immovable adhesion to the Catholic Faith with your attitude towards this type of agnosticism?

There is no reconciliation necessary. Loving comprehension of the agnostic, his position, his aims, his destiny, is the natural outcome of Catholicism. I look upon agnosticism as the turning-point of unbelief. If we look at the subject historically we shall find that, step by step, every article of the faith has been called in question, there is not a single point which has not been denied. The Blessed Trinity has been given up, and the world has been asked to believe in three distinct Gods, or in one God under three distinct names. The Incarnation has been assailed on every conceivable side. Instead of the Eternal Son Incarnate, truly and properly God, the opinion has been set forth that the Son was in fact a creature of superhuman, superangelic excellence and dignity, but still a creature. Instead of truly and properly man, the human nature has been represented as body only. Instead of the human mind in its integrity, there was offered a mental machine without a will. And then the Incarnation was given up altogether. Jesus Christ was still regarded as if Divinely commissioned; the authority of the Holy Scriptures was not denied; the reality of miracles was taken for granted. But in time the Divine commission was reduced to that which any

good man may be supposed to have; the authority of the Scriptures was levelled to that of any other sacred writings, and miracles were regarded as imaginations. Then arose questions as to whether the Christian story was not altogether a myth; and the Incarnation, alike on its Divine and human sides, passed out of the sphere of sceptical thought. Still, belief in God was left to men; but not the God of Christianity. Pantheism made its appearance, and the universe became God, or God the universe. That was not satisfactory; and deism asserted its claims. This in its turn was examined and found wanting, and atheism stepped to the front, denying, not the possibility, but the existence, of adequate evidence. Then came, as apparently the last step, positivism, denying that, on such a subject, there could be any evidence at all. Here the terminus was reached, and no further step could be taken, except by turning round in the direction of the Catholic Faith.

That returning step has been taken. It is called agnosticism. Now, when you see a man at the end of a road terminated by an insurmountable wall, he is still at the end, whichever way he looks. But it makes a great difference whether it is his back or his face that we see. If it be his back, then we know that he has gone as far as he can, and apparently means to stay there; but if it be his face, we know he has turned round, and we hope he is coming to us again. That is the way with unbelief. It has gone as far as it can get, but in agnosticism it has turned towards us. Positivism is unbelief as atheism staring with lack-lustre eyes into a dead wall: agnosticism is unbelief as atheism turning into Theism, and looking, though with uncertain gaze, in the direction of the Catholic Faith. Give it time enough, and it will come

back all the way. Some have already more than started on the return journey.

8. *The Inquirer's Spirit.*—Still, are you not in some danger of giving the inquirer too much sympathy? You state his case warmly.

My brother, I have not forgotten my own experience. But I do not consciously sympathize overmuch. My aim is simply to be just. But I do not think there is much danger. In fact, the earnest seeker ordinarily finds himself in great isolation. Amidst the crowd of disputants who rally to the attack or the defence of the Bible, he is as one in some forgotten city garden, walking alone, while the roar of many voices fills the air around him. He ponders deeply questions which the disputants ignore; they seem to him to be fighting about the history of wells; while his one desire is to draw and drink the living water. The believers and the disbelievers want to make good their contention as to how the wells are to be regarded: these say their sources are in God; those affirm their sources are in man; some that the waters are deep enough to spring from the fountain where the life of God and man are one; few remember that the quality of the water is to be ascertained by drinking it. The disbeliever especially errs. He is ever seeking to prove the Bible is of human structure; not seeing, that even so, he is but dealing with the walls of the wells, not with the water that rises within them. For my part, the amazed seeker may say, I am more desirous to know how much of the Bible is Divinely true than how much is humanly false; nor am I content to die of thirst by refusing to drink until I am able to discern and separate the Divine and the human elements in the living waters. The disbeliever seems to act on the principle that he will risk the loss of

great truth rather than risk the acceptance of some error; he will perish of hunger with the bread of life before him, while microscopic criticism is endeavouring to pick out mistakes. The man who will risk no error will receive no truth. It is better to risk believing ten small things that are false, than to risk the rejection of one great thing that is true. The special fault of the believer is that he is too ready to accept error lest he lose the truth; the special fault of the disbeliever is that he is too ready to reject truth lest he receive the error. Both ought to take the truth without the error, if possible; but in any case, take it. Better truth with error than no truth at all.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### DOUBT AS CRITICISM.

1. *Introduction.*—I still think you paint doubt in colours much too rosy.

I am sorry. For I should grieve greatly to make it attractive to any one. Doubt is never justifiable except when it is unavoidable or a duty. But at all events it must be understood if it is to be overcome, and I will ask you to bear a little longer with my statement of the doubter's difficulties.

2. *Some Characteristics of the Bible.*—What are these difficulties? Have you not exhausted them yet?

Well, no, I have laid down principles which may, I think, rightly guide the inquirer, but it is absolutely necessary to consider some more of his points. Let us begin with the Holy Scriptures. The first thing, perhaps, that strikes him in looking into the Bible, is that it was written not for the doubter but the believer. This is manifest in every page of the Old Testament. It is true that in the New Testament only S. Luke says what his object in writing was, but the others, as much as he, imply knowledge of, or belief in, Christ, on the part of those for whom they wrote. Some of them had probably seen the Lord, a much greater number probably had not, but to all, the Gospel was evidently a familiar story. Very much, therefore, that one might expect in a Gospel

addressed to thoughtful, scientific students who were not themselves eye-witnesses, must not be expected. The contact of Christianity with Jewish unbelief, however, is marked enough in the Gospels and in the Acts; and the latter gives information as to its contact with Gentile unbelief also. We are thus able to consider the principle that underlies all doubting, ancient or modern, Jewish or Gentile, and the kind of evidence on which the preachers of the new faith relied to convert their hearers.

3. *Selected Writings.*—What is your next point?

The next thing to be noted is the implication that we have only a number of selected writings. This, we need not doubt, is true of the whole Bible; it is certainly true of the New Testament. S. Luke makes it clear that there were many narratives besides his own. He does not seem to have considered the story he wrote for Theophilus to be superior to other narratives, but only better adapted than they to his correspondent, who probably felt the need of a more systematic statement than other narratives gave. How many stories perished we have no means of knowing, but the way the three other Gospels begin shows no indication of the intention to write any connected and formal history. S. Mark begins with the words, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God," implying that those whom he addressed knew, without further explanation, who Jesus Christ was. S. Matthew begins a little more formally, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," and then gives the genealogy and birth, but in such terms as imply that readers had other sources of information. The opening of the fourth Gospel is really an exposition rather than a narrative, and implies knowledge elsewhere obtained. In the Acts one notes an opening similar to

that of the third Gospel. The Epistle to the Romans begins with a statement which implies familiarity on the part of his readers with the story of Christ. It would be absurd to complain that we cannot know all that was then known, for a like complaint might be made of all history, except that which we make ourselves. At the same time, it is right to bear the fact in mind, for otherwise we may be unfairly called upon to give assent to things about which it is impossible to have the certainty either of the writers, or of those to whom they addressed themselves.

4. *Strangeness of Contents.*—I do not dispute all this. What next?

Another thing which must strike the reader is the peculiar character of the contents of the Bible, the strangeness of the events narrated and of the doctrines set forth. Confining ourselves for the present to the New Testament, the first words of S. Mark's Gospel are sufficiently startling. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!" But when we turn to S. John we meet a series of statements more startling still. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." Scarcely less surprising is the commencement of the Acts of the Apostles or of the Epistle to the Romans. The evidence needs to be very strong which renders these assertions credible, stronger still to make them credited. For one thing, they are apparently outside of our own experience, and all reasonable inference therefrom. For another, some of them are outside of any immediate experience we can conceive possible. We cannot imagine John knowing directly that the Word was in the begin-

ning, that the Word was God, and that the Word made all things. If knowledge at all, it can only be in the sense of inference from observed facts. It does not, of course, follow that John was wrong. His inference may, for anything we have yet seen, turn out to be as fully justified by the facts as is the modern theory of universal æther. But the statements are in themselves so little in accord with what we personally know as to warrant the demand for the most trustworthy and decisive evidence.

5. *Lapse of Time*.—I admit the evidence ought to be strong indeed. But go on.

We have now to observe the way in which the question is affected by the distance of time and difference of language. If Christianity is to be rationally accepted by the people on any other ground than that of the authority of the Church, it must be presented, as we have seen, in a form that does not demand scholarship on the part of the acceptors. It is true that many of the results at which learned men have arrived are easily appreciated even by those who have little learning of their own, but this is really a case of acceptance on authority whether on the one side or the other. It is, as every observer knows, altogether inaccurate to imagine that it is Christians alone who follow the leadership of others. It may even be that, in proportion to their whole numbers, there is more of such dependence on the part of sceptics than on the part of Christians. At all events I have met many who appeared to have no other reason for their unbelief than the supposed example of Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, Laing, and Renan. In comparison with such submission of the judgment to great names, the course pursued by the average Christian seems positively scientific, because, besides the weighty authority of the whole



Church, he has the witness of his own experience to the beneficent effects of Christianity. But unless the question is to be settled by comparison of authorities alone, in which case Christianity has decidedly the best of it, so far as historical learning is concerned, we must be able to fix on some simple and central propositions, as important to the most as to the least learned, on which ordinary men are capable of forming a judgment. Speaking broadly, there are few thoughtful men who are not as competent as scholars to determine these two fundamental questions: Is it possible to account for the Bible in general on any other supposition than that of its substantial truth? Is there, in particular, any other adequate explanation of Christianity than that it requires the God whom Christ reveals to account for the Christ the New Testament presents? If these two questions can be truly answered in a hostile sense, essential unbelief will have shown itself well founded; if they can be truly answered in a favourable sense, essential belief will stand forth scientifically justified. But nothing of any real moment will be determined until these two questions are answered. Happily, for the solution of these great problems, no more learning is needed than is within reach of most, if not all, of those who are interested in the evidential aspects of Christianity.

6. *The Religion of the Bible and of To-day.*—I am delighted with that way of putting it! What next?

In the lapse of time there has come a change of another kind, one whose full import can hardly be realized without reading the whole of the sacred books—the contrast between what may be called the religion of the Bible and the kind of Christianity with which we are most familiar in contemporary life. One can quite understand why it is that, on the part of all kinds of opponents, attacks on the



Church are much more severe and longer sustained than those directed against its Founder. The ordinary reason given for this, though true, is not the whole truth. It is, indeed, much easier to find fault with historical Christianity than to shock almost universal sensibility by setting one's self against a character of such supreme moral loveliness. But there is yet another motive. If it can be proved that Christianity is a failure, and that there is no probability of its being anything else than a failure, then it may be in fact disposed of without directly attacking Christ at all. Englishmen are pre-eminently practical, and if Christianity cannot prove itself true to their moral and religious experience, and of power sufficient to meet the moral and religious needs of their nature, they will ignore it as completely as its half unconscious absorption into their life will permit. At the same time, its relation to the evolution of society cannot be justly overlooked. Whether "supernatural" or not in its origin, whether continuously "supernatural" or not as a Divinely imparted life in each "soul" that receives it, it is yet manifestly subject to natural laws of growth, and it would therefore be unscientific to examine what it is at any point without regard to what it has been and what it is becoming. Possibly, from the standpoint of evolution, it may yet be acknowledged that history shows no other success that comes within measurable distance of it.

7. *The Bible and Darwinism.*—That is a very important point. What about the Bible and current scientific philosophy?

The subject is of grave interest. If the New Testament is to be held responsible for what scientific men suppose to be the teaching of the Old as to the formation of the worlds, the origin of species, the descent

of man, the story of the fall, the history of the flood, and, perhaps, one or two other points, the problem will be speedily solved in opposite senses by different men. Some, I suppose, will back the Bible against science, and some will back science against the Bible. But a doubter, if of scientific spirit, may well decline to be bound by any such alternatives. This is not one of the subjects on which the Catholic Church has pronounced judgment, and therefore, from the standpoint of the Catholic Faith, one is not bound to have any opinion at all as to which is right, or as to whether both are right. But, putting aside the Church, I may answer for the inquirer that neither in logic nor in honour is he bound to reject Christ because of any decision in favour of Darwinism. He may well say, "I have to reason the matter out with the aid of what light I can get from all sources, and I know of nothing in the philosophy of science which obliges me to put a peremptory end to all inquiry at its very threshold, by deciding for or against Genesis or Geology. Even were I compelled to abandon, as unscientific, half a dozen pages of the Bible, that in itself is no scientific reason why I should give up all the rest." Surely this is right. The questions already described as fundamental do not involve for their settlement any such points as the scientific accuracy or inaccuracy of the two or three chapters which touch on points of science. The ultimate inquiry will probably be, not how the errors, but how the truths, of the Bible are to be accounted for.

8. *The Spirit of the Bible*.—So far I think I shall be able to agree with you. But what next?

A characteristic feature of the writers of the Bible is their calm unconsciousness of any other needs than those which it supplies. This is probably explicable enough,

but it must be confessed it is a little provoking. The apostles and evangelists do not seem to have any idea that one might legitimately have other interests than those distinctively called religious. In some of their writings there are manifest signs of strain, of high tension, as of those who were literally waiting for the coming of their Lord. It is difficult for the doubter to feel that this is a justifiable attitude. The Sunday atmosphere may well be the highest, but there could be no highest without a higher, no higher without a high, and no high without a low and a lower. Now, to keep up the tension of Sunday all through the week may be possible to apostles, saints, and heroes, but it is not possible to ordinary men. Besides, God is God of Monday as well as of Sunday. The business of the world is God's business. Allow as much as one may for human freedom, it is still a freedom within limits. The human will directs forces, but even the direction is limited by law. If the direction be man's, the forces and their laws are God's. But the direction itself is limited not only by laws of forces but also by laws of evolution, as science phrases it; by Divine Providence, in the language of religion. Overruling all the purposes of man is the purpose of God, a fact peremptorily declared in the Bible times without number, and recognized in all departments of human experience. Agriculture, manufacture, commerce, industry of all kinds, government, social institutions, public and private amusements, family and individual life, have, as really as the Bible, a Divine as well as a human element. Architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, breathe with the breath of God. The songs of love, and hope, and trust, and joy, touching earth and earthly interests, derive their melody from him. The nursery, the playroom, the

school, the college, the study, the boat, the cricket-field, the gymnasium, the public-house, the theatre, the lecture hall, the chamber of legislation, the offices of government, the farm, the mill, the shop, the merchantman and man-of-war, the drill ground of volunteers and the barracks of the soldier, the hospital, the asylum, the refuges for the poor, have all their Shekinah as well as the Church and the place of private prayer. God moves the great world, and the great world moves in God. Life is not only rhythmical, it is full of rhythms. It is not possible to continue in one stay. But in reading the New Testament, one seems to be always in church.

There may, however, be good reason for this. Perhaps it was not possible to adequately emphasize the truths to be conveyed without a temporary increase of strain under which all ordinary interest would slacken for the time. Perhaps it was for this that the natural misconception of the apostles as to the date of their Lord's return, was allowed to pass. Perhaps there *could* be no adequate feeling of the eternal without diminished feeling of the temporal. Perhaps it is the tension of the climber, who for the while forgets all else than the lofty height he must reach, but who, when he returns to lower earth, carries back with him to common life a vision which henceforth never leaves him. Perhaps it is a rising as on eagle's wings, though the altitude nearly strain blood and eye to bursting, that we may see the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, as God sees them, and that we may never forget that sight when we come back to earth, and that, in the strength it brings, we may run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

These are, at least, possibilities; and should it appear that what looks at first like excess of emphasis is really

a revelation of the eternal in the temporal, given not to destroy but to direct aright all earthly interests, then this peculiar feature of the New Testament will tend to the acceptance of Christianity as specially Divine. So far forth, it will be regarded not as a substitute for, but as a Special Revelation which interprets, all other teaching. Through the atmosphere of the world a finer atmosphere will penetrate at every point. Spiritual glory will encompass and enrich human life. The light of God will shine into and on all the ways of men.



## CHAPTER XV.

### DOUBT AS MISAPPREHENSION.

1. *Introduction.*—I suppose one of the chief difficulties that stand in the way of an inquirer is the apparent partiality of Christianity? What does your ideal doubter say?

He says: The method of publishing the Divine message is in startling contrast to the message itself. Its very soul is love for all the world, but by far the greater part of all the world has not received the message yet. And even were the time come when it had reached every living ear, what must we say concerning the multitudes of the dead? Say nothing, cry some of the pious. Well, it would be better to say nothing than to utter the words of the Athanasian Creed as it stands, in its English dress, barring the way of life. But the admonitions of the pious can have effect only on those whose piety is of the same pattern; none at all on the doubter. I can see no scientific reason for saying nothing. I grant that from the standpoint of textual authority it would be difficult to prove that the love of God to all the world was taught in the New Testament. In the proof passages the love is hedged about with conditions which may, however, from a point of view the pious do not often take, be inherent in the love itself. Thus, we have the words, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only

begotten Son," but immediately after come the limiting words, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." What, then, of those who have not believed on Him? The implication is, they perish. Among those who have not believed must be included those who could not believe. They perish. Among those who could not believe must be included all who never heard of Him. "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" They perish. They who have never heard of Him constitute the greater part of all the dead, the greater part of all who have yet been. They perish. And this is God's love of all the world! "All things have been delivered unto Me of the Father: and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."<sup>1</sup> Knowledge, if not belief, depends on the will of the Son. "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him."<sup>2</sup> No one can of himself. The knowledge and the will, then, are both outside of man's own power.

"For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Whether it is the faith, or the grace, or both, that S. Paul here calls the gift of God, matters little for our purpose. In any case the salvation is "not of ourselves." If it be the faith that is meant, the point is settled. If it be the grace, the point is also settled. For manifestly there can be no faith receiving the grace, where there is no grace to be received. This view, then, makes knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 44.

will, and belief, in this man or that, dependent on extra-human causes and conditions. It is no wonder that we find the same apostle speaking of those who love God as "the called according to His purpose;" or that he adds, "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Unless something is overlooked that ought to be taken into account, we have in S. Paul's description of salvation a complete disappearance of the voluntary element. Every believer is a Christian automaton worked upon as God pleases. After this even the following terrible sentences are read with a faint sigh of relief as showing some consciousness that it was not wholly unnatural to say something on the other side. "Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth He still find fault? For who withstandeth His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" With all due respect to S. Paul, one can hardly help feeling that the inquiry he condemns is legitimate enough; and his reference to God's long-suffering of "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" scarcely seems to meet either the logic or the righteousness of the case. But whether S. Paul was accurate or inaccurate, it is difficult to reconcile either *his* language or the language of the Lord with the belief that God's love of the world means anything else than what the narrower Calvinists call it, the world of the elect.

2. *The Standard of Final Judgment.*—I suppose your ideal doubter will say that he is not compelled either to accept or reject Christianity on this issue?

Yes. He says: It is not self-evident that it was impossible for S. Paul to make a mistake, or that it is impossible to put the passage quoted in another and truer light. But putting this for the present on one side, I am concerned with the words of Jesus Christ alone. Were I constrained to affirm some deficiency of knowledge even in Him, it would not logically follow that I must not believe in Him. For it is at least arguable, that such deficiency was a part of His taking our low estate. But we need not debate that question. We are in a position to discuss our present problem without reference to that. And, first of all, we may at once relieve our souls of the heavy burden of the destiny of the heathen. It is absolutely certain from Christ's words that they who know Him not will be judged by a standard with which impossible belief has nothing to do, as may be seen in the twenty-fifth chapter of S. Matthew.

3. *Eternal Punishment.*—What, then, is your view of eternal punishment?

I do not think "my view" matters much. The doubter says: In whatever sense "eternal punishment" is to be interpreted, it is to be noted that it is the consequence of the neglect of elementary duties, a neglect which renders men unfit to live. It must, from a philosophical point of view, be granted that the manifestation of God in the universe is at once evidence and limitation of omnipotence. And if it be impossible to make men good against their wills, that they perish is no argument against Divine goodness; it is an argument against human badness. If, then, we may interpret eternal punishment as final cessation of

conscious being, there is nothing in this inconsistent with the omnipresence of Divine love. Eternal fire need present, on this hypothesis, no difficulty. The significance of the noun-adjective "eternal" must be determined by that of the noun-substantive "fire." Doubtless the "fire" will last until all the destructible is destroyed. But if we are compelled to interpret "eternal punishment" as meaning unending conscious torture, that doctrine of Christianity must be rejected, or else the love of God for the world be disbelieved. No ingenuity can reconcile the two. Those who think clearly cannot believe both, unless they can also believe that whatever is, is not. The question then must be faced, Are we to abandon belief in the universality of Divine love, or hold Christ mistaken in His doctrine of punishment? From the standpoint of science the conception of a "fire" as literally eternal, or of "punishment" as literally unending, if either of these be represented as the "natural" consequence of sin, is absolutely impossible. It is not simply that the doctrine is incongruous with experience, it is also that it is directly contrary to all we know of the natural history of finite beings, all of which have their day, and cease to be as distinct forms. Science asserts eternity of nothing but God. If, therefore, we are to live for ever, eternal life must indeed be the gift of God. Is, then, eternal fire the gift of God also? The fire must burn *out* unless God prevent it; it must burn *up* the devil and his angels and the souls of men, unless God interpose to keep them alive! There is no difficulty in "imagining" conscious beings of various durations from the age of suns to the age of ephemera, but if science is to be trusted, all must, late or soon, cease to exist as distinct entities, unless God will otherwise. It is consistent with Divine love that all who



do not finally fail in the performance of the duties set forth in the standard of Divine judgment, should be taken up into the eternal life of God, and that they who do so fail should go away into eternal punishment as extinction of conscious being. But it is consistent neither with science, if the effect be supposed to be naturally caused, nor with love, if the effect be supposed to be supernaturally caused, that the wicked should go away into eternal tortures in literal or figurative fire. I can find no scientific evidence that Christ's words must be interpreted in that sense; but should such evidence be forthcoming, I should feel that I should honour Him more, and be truer to His teaching as a whole, in believing that on this point He was mistaken, or that He had been misreported by the evangelist.

4. *Slow Diffusion.*—There remains the difficulty of accounting for the slow diffusion of the Gospel in the world? What says your doubter here?

On the view which seems most consistent with the character of Christ, the difficulty is a diminishing one. According to the New Testament, Christ, not the Gospel, is the Saviour of the World. Not conscious faith, but unconscious obedience, is, as we have seen, the principle of judgment as regards the nations. But the difficulty must remain unreduced to those who decline the view I have given. As there are some who believe in the Bible rather than in the God of the Bible, so are there some who believe in the Gospel rather than in the Christ of the Gospel. As they can see no other way in which Christ can save than through the Gospel, they conclude He does save in no other way. As there is no other Name given under heaven whereby we must be saved, they infer that He who bears the Name cannot save except

through the Name. We have seen that this is a doctrine which S. Paul seems to favour, though, as it is inconsistent with what he says elsewhere, there may be reasonable doubt as to whether he is rightly interpreted here. To all who regard the work of Christ as confined to the places where His Gospel is preached, the difficulty must be terrible indeed. With what agonized hearts must they regard the multitudes of the heathen world! With what frenzied zeal must they rush to the mission field! How impossible to know an hour's happiness while with every moment an unsaved soul passes away! And then how appalling to think of all those who have perished while the Church was asleep! And of all, except the "chosen people," who died before Christ came! Is it possible for men to think thus without their souls sinking under the burden of horror, anguish, and despair?

Nay, it must be that salvation, being a universal need, shall be as accessible as air, light, and food. The zeal of the missionary may surely find motive enough in the passion for proclaiming their Saviour to the souls of men, Who is still the Saviour of all who *will* to be good, whether they know Him or not. Salvation must be possible to all in the sense in which it is possible to all, according to that which they have, to give meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the homeless, clothing to the naked, comfort to the sick, and sympathy to the bound. If to enlighten the world as to the laws of universal forces which are operative in men's lives, whether known or not, be motive enough to the man of science, surely to reveal the laws of spiritual force by which men live, however little they know it, is motive enough to the missionary of Christ! Is the sanctification, the illumination, the progress of souls insufficient induce-

ment? Must you do nothing for men, because you are not necessary to Christ in saving them from eternal death? Is your love for Christ so feeble that nothing short of saving a soul from everlasting ruin will move you? You will see men hunger for the bread of life, but if you are not sure the hunger will, unless you interpose, prove fatal, you will let them hunger on? In what, then, do you differ from the most brutal of men? Who will refuse a crust to a famishing man, if he knows him to be famishing? That is exactly the lowest form of benevolence known to mankind. What are you, then, better than others? Do not the heathen even so? Surely, your passion for Christ will at least equal that of the teacher for teaching, the reformer for reforming! Is the one to say I will teach nothing, the other I will reform nothing, unless the teaching and the reform are essential to men's being, not simply to their well being? Surely it is a strange thing to ask, What is the use of sending missionaries, if the heathen can be saved without them? What is the use of leading men to a higher life, unless we know they cannot, without us, live any life at all? What is the use of bearing in our hands knowledge, culture, refinement, beauty, and glory to all the world, unless we can first say to all, without us you will certainly perish everlastingly? To win for Christ universally recognized dominion, to secure for Him the worship of all hearts, and the conscious obedience of all lives, to see men in their new enlightenment as to the source of all the good they had, and the wealth and blessedness of all the good they might have, spring up with eager and grateful joy, forgetting the things which are behind and pressing forward to the things which are before, this ought surely to be motive enough for any man! Is there not some touch of

unconscious pride in this strange unwillingness to preach Christ, except to those who are believed to be otherwise for ever lost? Oh, would-be monopolist of salvation! You would take the air and the light, the water and the food, the common salvation, and, while your missionaries deal out the doles to those they reach, let all the rest perish! One thing the doubter need not doubt. The salvation that is at the mercy of the Church is not salvation as Jesus Christ understood it. The saving health of God is accessible to every child of man. He who is kind to those around him, knowing as yet no other duties, has Christ within him, and is one of the saved. "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me."

5. *Places of Nations in the Divine Plan.*—You think, then, that God is not a respecter of nations any more than of persons. In that case, why do races, like individuals, vary so much in mental endowment?

Though in a sense explicable on the principle of evolution, the question is scarcely answerable. Indeed, evolution rather explains the how than the why. We note the influence of ancestry, of climate, of geographical position, of material advantages, and so forth; we trace modifications from generation to generation, the resultant of the action of environment on the race, and of the race on the environment. But all this does not answer the question. We may, however, recognize as applicable the great Christian principle, that neither race nor individual is intended to live for self. The ministry of universal service, which Christ required in principle from His disciples, is becoming the ideal of science. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is found to be best for the lover and the loved. Let him be greatest who



serves the most is found to be best for both the server and the served. So far as conscious action is concerned, the nations have to-day scarcely more perception of their true relation to each other than had Jew and Gentile. But that does not alter the Divine fact that they must serve each other whether they will or not. The purpose a nation serves is not always known to the nation; nor is it always limited to the duration of its national existence. Living Greece had small power in the world in comparison with the influence she has exerted from the hour she became a Roman province until the present day. Her sculpture, architecture, philosophy, oratory, poetry, have penetrated every civilized land; and the questions she raised are still among the chief to which the genius of every nation turns. The ruling power of Rome is greater to-day than when she sat on her seven-throned hill, mistress of the world. Her law reappears in every system of jurisprudence, her governmental conceptions are a part of all state craft, her military principles are studied by modern armies, her capacity and skill in organization are lessons to the race. Never had Zion, from the days of Abraham till the carrying away into Babylon, from the resurrection of the nation to the destruction of Jerusalem, a thousandth part the influence with which she belts the world to-day. Her songs are sung in all lands. "Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee," she cries; and kindreds, and tribes, and tongues breathe their worship in the words which she has taught. In her language, we moan our sins, present our needs, utter our prayers, declare our faith, express our hopes, peal forth our joy. There is no mood of the human soul for which Zion has not furnished fitting expression. She is, too, our great interpreter of



Providence ; she shows us, as none besides, how the King of kings rules the nations ; she is the revealer of national life as resting on the strong purpose of God ; she is, from first to last, the great monotheistic teacher of the glory of righteousness, and the shame of sin, and the hope of salvation. The more one studies other histories, the more distinctly the place of every people, in the Divine purpose of an ultimately perfect civilization, is recognized, the more clearly stands out the association of Israel as a royal priesthood with the religious preparation of men, during all time, for the reception of the Christ. For the process through which Israel passed as a nation, is essentially the process through which every man must pass who consciously embraces the Saviour of the world. That the instrument of this preparation should have been one chosen people need no more surprise us than that Greece and Rome should have been the instruments of God for other purposes.

6. *Destiny of the Dead.*—But what of the nations who perished while these processes were going on ?

About this there is no certain knowledge. Is it possible that there is anything in the nature of national life in the present other-world ? Is all consciousness of nationality, all remembrance of the past, abolished at death ? Or may we believe that the individual members of ancient races know the part they played in human civilization ? Is it given to the great prophets of all peoples, which have been since the world began, to see, like their Lord, of the travail of their souls and be satisfied ? Is the undying love of fame an ignoble passion, or is it a prophecy of a fact that they who pass into life shall see from their invisible dwelling among the stars the fruit of their labours on earth ? If so, the unity to which the world is growing

will not be the unity of its last generation only. The "one family in heaven and in earth" must embrace all—Israelite, Canaanite, Egyptian, Jew, Greek, Roman, Scythian, bond and free—who have not finally failed in the elementary duties of human life, according to the light they had. Are we to suppose they do not see now the movement of God among all peoples, do not realize the progress of the world to that far-off Divine event towards which the whole creation moves? It is true physical science can say nothing either for or against this. But is it not implied in Christianity? If it is, it fills the heart with a new joy, and gives to evolution a new and a Divine meaning. The apparent partiality of the Christian scheme is explained as a part of the great method of God into whose secret we shall enter when we "know even as also we are known."

7. *Re-interpretation of Christ's Words.*—You have not yet quite explained the difficulty you raised?

No, but let us now, in the light of these suggestions, turn back to the words of Jesus Christ already quoted, and see whether we have truly interpreted them. "Neither doth any know the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."<sup>1</sup> The word "know" is here evidently used as co-extensive with "reveal." We are not, therefore, obliged to hold that there is no knowledge of God, but only that there is no revelation of Him, except that which Christ wills to give. To whom, then, does He will to reveal God? To all who feel the need: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xi. 17.

My burden is light.”<sup>1</sup> It appears, then, that He reveals God to those who, using the knowledge they have, desire more, and submit to the conditions on which it can be obtained. It may be said: Yes, but that only applies to those who come into contact with Christianity. I have answered this already. If the position I have taken be right, every man without exception who does not finally fail in the simplest duties of life comes into contact with Christ at death, if not before. Every man has enough knowledge of right to show him the next step. Let him take that, and more will come. “He is the light that lighteth every man.”<sup>2</sup> In the fulness of his time, every ‘righteous’ man will have not only knowledge but revelation. Again, “No man can come to Me except the Father draw him.”<sup>3</sup> If the narrower Calvinistic view of these words be the right one, I must admit that my case fails. I cannot reconcile that view with the Catholic conception of God. But let us see whether we must take that view. The statement is that only they come to Christ whom the Father draws; but that it is possible to resist that drawing is repeatedly stated. Are there, then, any willing to come who have no opportunity, in life or in death? Surely not. But are there any who would be willing if they only knew of Christ? A great multitude probably, all they, in short, who are not condemned by the standard of final judgment already given, all these will come to Him in the end. Are we, then, to conclude that all those among the Jews who did not respond to the Father’s drawing, were without doubt to perish everlastingly? No such assertion is made by Jesus. There seems no reason to conclude that all they who failed to respond then, failed always. All we can legitimately say is that no one who

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xi. 28-30.<sup>2</sup> S. John i. 9.<sup>3</sup> S. John vi. 44.

is not so hopelessly bad that it is better he should perish than live will finally fail to respond to the Father's drawing. The remaining passages, so far as they do not seem to be in harmony with Christ's teaching, need not be considered at present.

8. *Sacramental View of the Bible.*—But if you admit any error at all, where will you stop? If all the words be not Divine how can we be sure that any are?

I hardly expected that inquiry from you. Do you not believe that there is a spiritual faculty in man? Do you not believe in the capacity of that faculty when guided by the Holy Spirit? But besides, why not take what may be called the sacramental view of the Bible? Without expressing any opinion as to what is the right view of the Holy Eucharist, let me assume, for the moment, that there is a real presence of Christ in the sacred elements. It is perfectly well known that absolutely pure bread and wine do not exist, but that, it is admitted, does not hinder their penetration by the Real Presence, or in the smallest degree affect the validity or the meaning of the sacrament. It is equally well known that no human thought or language is absolutely free from error, but that does not prevent the thought and language of the Holy Scriptures being filled by the real presence of the Holy Spirit. The microscope may discover "foreign particles" in the bread and wine, so may criticism discover "foreign particles" in the Bible. But as in the former case so in the latter, no healthy mind could find in that any real hindrance. The Holy Eucharist is still the "Body and Blood" of Christ; the Holy Scriptures are still the "Word of God."

BOOK IV.

QUESTIONINGS.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### SCIENCE.

1. *Introduction.*—You have dealt with unbelief and doubt. I suppose the questionings with which you are about to deal now are such as are not in themselves necessarily sceptical, but such as might, if unwisely treated, easily lead to scepticism?

Precisely so. My aim is to set certain things in a truer light than that in which one often finds them.

I hope you are not going to thresh out again the wearisome subject of the supposed contradiction of the Bible by science?

Do not be alarmed. I have a much more important point in view, namely, some aspects of the attitude of our Blessed Lord towards scientific knowledge. But we must first consider what we mean by "science."

2. *Things Assumed.*—You mean, of course, from the two standpoints of the sceptic and of the anti-sceptic?

In a sense, yes. But one dislikes both words, because of their tendency to fix thought on the attitude of the mind towards things rather than on the things themselves; on the limitations of knowledge and belief instead of the knowledge or belief itself. One does not like, if he is taken into a garden, to have his attention called away from shrub and flower to discuss the exact length and breadth of the space occupied, or the form and height of

the surrounding boundaries. For like reason, the term *truth-seekers* is objectionable. Better truth-finders, truth-lovers, truth-livers. We need not object to a true free thinker, spelt, as Mr. Gladstone says, in two words; though, even here, one would rather emphasize "thinker" than "free;" and "true" than either.

What are the things that must be taken for granted?

First of all, that there *are* truth, right, and beauty—which are but three sides of one thing—and that though we cannot define them by the aid of anything else, we know them well enough to test, so far as we test at all, everything else by their aid. This assumption underlies all science. If a man does not believe there is truth, that it can be found, that it can be recognized when found, why should he call himself a truth-seeker? When one glories in the title of freethinker, surely the freedom is valued because of its aid in reaching truth? I have said I do not much care for the word, and have given my reason. But here is one sense in which I can fitly call myself a freethinker—freedom from excessive wish to be free. One value of the power of choice is that by it we can choose not to choose, but to obey; and as soon as one is sure that he knows what ought to be obeyed, one would have obedience made automatic through habit. I do not object on this point to Roman Catholic logic. If the pope showed himself to be an infallible guide, I would follow him, so far as such following might be possible to a nature that is not altogether under control of its own will. So, too, with the same reservation, would I follow Mr. Spencer, were he infallible. I have no desire to err, or to "sin," or to be ugly, for the sake of being free. If in exchange for "freedom" one could have fulness of life, a life of truth, righteousness, and beauty, one would very

gladly give up other freedom than this. Man ought to value liberty as enabling him to enter with his whole heart into the free bondage of the beautiful, instead of the slavery of the ugly; of the right, instead of that of the wrong; of the true, instead of that of the false.

If there are freethinkers who question the existence of truth, right, and beauty, they need not be taken into account as reasoners. All reasoning, intellectual, moral, or emotional, assumes that it is enough to see a thing to be true, right, or beautiful, in order to recognize its claim to be believed, obeyed, or admired. I say to recognize its claim, because—whether from intellectual inertia, or torpidity of conscience, or brutality of taste, or a general sluggishness of will—belief, obedience, and admiration do not always follow upon the consciousness of the truth, right, and beauty of anything. I simply take it for granted that this triune ideal, by which all things are judged, which is not itself judged by any, shines with steadfast light in the azure of consciousness.

3. *A Theory of Knowledge*.—Must we then begin with “mystery”?

I think that does not follow, but I am not sure, feeling uncertain what “mystery” means. As a free thinker, one rejects the notion that ignorance, in any degree, can be a standard of anything except defect. We may value greatly the philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, without admitting his doctrine of knowledge, or rather, while accepting it, we may give it another interpretation. It may be new, perhaps, to some, though it may be old to many, yet that for which it stands is neither new nor old, but eternal. The interpretation is this: The consciousness that cannot be defined is fulness, not deficiency, of knowledge. Mr. Spencer criticizes with wonderfully patient

power, religious and scientific ideas, and resolves them all into an indefinite consciousness of one transcendent "mystery." But why? Because he sees clearly that the so-called mystery is more or other than all the definitions. And this is "ultimate" knowledge. If I am asked what the "object" thus known is, I cannot answer in the sense of definition. But I may ask you to consult your own consciousness. You will find that you know, truth, right, and beauty so well that, notwithstanding all your patient research, and the continual ascent in your efforts at definition, you invariably fall short of the reality. In the nature of the case, your knowledge of these is, and must ever be, more than your definitions. You *know* the eternal; you *define* the temporal.<sup>1</sup>

But is not this really knowledge of God? What else can it be?

I think so. Judging from external experience alone, the universe may have been "made," "created," or "evolved," by some one of immense power, wisdom, and goodness, but not, as far as I can judge, by one free from "defect" within, or "restraint" without. But this is not God. The God we know transcends definition. Mr. Spencer is right, but, as I have said, needs re-interpretation. The atheistic, theistic, and pantheistic theories are all seen to be "unthinkable." But why? Because we know God so well that we are conscious of the inadequacy of all description. He, we know, is more than omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, personality and the like *can* express. Yes, the atheist is right in saying he has no "idea" of God, if he means no adequate idea, that God is "unthinkable," in any exhaustive sense. Never-

<sup>1</sup> Is there not here a suggestion, at least, I will not say of immortality—a misleading idea—but of continued conscious existence?



theless, he *knows* God, for if he did not, he could never be conscious of the failure of his "ideas," or of his "thinking." Idea-ing, think-ing, is of the limited, but we could not be conscious of *that* if we were not also conscious of the not limited with which the comparison is made. Thus, contradictory as it may sound, the atheist is often unconsciously truer, in the form of his denial, than the theist, in the form of his affirmation. Only, the true-hearted theist has still, despite his atheistic explanations, conscious and obedient trust in God; while the true-hearted atheist, despite his theistic denials, has only unconscious and not always obedient trust in—he thinks he knows not what. I say "he thinks he knows not;" but I am sure he does know God. Oh, the pity of it! For "thinking" *does* affect conduct and life to an immense extent,—to the extent even of as great a ruin as the laws of the universe will permit. The unwisdom of certain theologians is that they so often give highly atheistic "explanations" of God; the unwisdom of certain other scientific men is in supposing that, because they are compelled to reject the "explanations," they must reject God also, not remembering that the consciousness of falseness and wrongness can only arise from the consciousness of trueness and rightness; *i.e.* the consciousness of God is the standard with which the explanations are compared and are seen to fail. The day will come when science itself will confess that the consciousness of the more than definable, the more than "thinkable," is our highest "knowledge." In Mr. Spencer's use of the word, knowledge is limited to what he calls the definite consciousness; while strongly affirming that there is an indefinite consciousness also. But the last term is of uncertain meaning, and might easily be confused with

that kind of consciousness which is less than definite, whereas what he means is the more than definite, that which persists through and passes beyond the definite.

4. *Consciousness and Relation.*—I suppose if you were really addressing an audience (forgive the interruption) you would not reason quite so closely?

Yes, every bit, but not for more than ten minutes without a break. . . . Obviously, then, the first ultimate is consciousness, extra-definite, definite, and indefinite. There is no answer to the question, what is it? Every one knows, and no one can tell. If it could be defined, it would not be an ultimate. For in the very meaning of the word that which can be resolved into anything else is not "the last." But even if consciousness be not an ultimate, its "authority" is final for us. It is useless to ask, "Is it trustworthy?" The question itself assumes that it is. For let the answer be "Yes." How do we know it is trustworthy? Evidently, by consciousness. But let the answer be "No." How are we assured of its untrustworthiness? Still, by consciousness. If, then, we believe on the testimony of consciousness that consciousness is untrustworthy, we are believing the very thing we deny. We must, therefore, hold the trustworthiness of consciousness. It is another question—Does all of which we are conscious exist as we are conscious of it? Let us consider. We cannot indeed, be conscious of anything that does not exist as a fact of consciousness. Take, for example, "ghosts." I am conscious of "something" to which I give the name ghost. The something is quite certain, whether it be a "spirit," or an "image," or an "idea;" but my assertion as to what the something is may turn out to be altogether incorrect. There can be no question as to the existence of a fact to which I give a

name, but it by no means follows that I have given the name correctly. In short, consciousness is directly trustworthy as to its own facts, but not directly trustworthy as to their interpretation. This it is the business of observation and reasoning to discover, so far as discoverable. But all such observation and reasoning take for granted the consciousness of relations which may be compared with the threefold ideal as to their truth, their right, or their beauty. This consciousness is, at least, partially intelligible if there exist some relations by comparison with which we can judge all others, but how the consciousness of them originated, if no such relations exist, is inexplicable. May we not suppose that what we are really conscious of is—God in relations to all, and that the qualities of these relations constitute a standard called truth, right, beauty?

5. *Elements of Science*.—It seems to me all this would need a good deal of expanding, explaining, and illustrating to make it intelligible to working men, but I think you are right in going down into the depths on a subject like this, even though I do not altogether see your drift.

You will presently. Meanwhile, I will pursue the subject without reference to whether it could be followed by an audience or not. It is worth while noting how much our confidence in science is, as a matter of fact, a confidence in relations. Here is a piece of melting ice; a few minutes ago it was of considerable size, now it is no larger than a shilling. What is it I perceive? When I say ice of a given size, I suppose a permanent standard, *i.e.* a certain unchanging relation; the thing itself has changed, but not the standard by which it is "judged." That is, I have a conception of quantitative relation, and this consciousness seems fundamental and

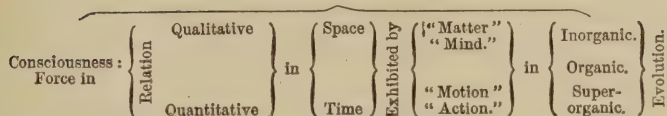
permanent. In like manner, there is intuition of kind or quality. It may be that all the differences in the "material" universe will turn out to be quantitative only; but the difference between time and space, or between either and matter, is fundamentally a difference of kind or quality; in other words, relations are qualitative as well as quantitative. What, then, are they relations of? Of force, manifested in "matter and motion," including therein, if you must, mind and action. I add that in relations are included their connection with each other. Is it possible to push our analysis further? Mr. Spencer, indeed, reduces consciousness itself to experiences of force. But even if we allowed that experiences of force are force, the latter is so unlike the former that it is better to have a distinct word. Ultimates or not, we have consciousness, force, relation. I think we must add space and time. Whether the ideas originated in experiences of force, transmitted as intuitions, we need not inquire; they are taken for granted in all science. Perhaps, also, it may be well to retain the terms, "matter" and 'motion," without denying that they stand for experiences of force. It is asserted both by the great scientific<sup>1</sup> philosopher Mr. Herbert Spencer, and by the great literary critic Mr. Matthew Arnold, that all these are "manifestations" of an omnipresent Power Whom they call unknowable. But as they evidently mean thereby a Power that is more than definition can express, and as the word "unknowable" might mean something that was not an object of consciousness at all, I would substitute for it the term "incomprehensible:"

<sup>1</sup> As a like expression in my "Problems" has been misunderstood, I would explain that by "scientific philosopher" I simply mean one whose sphere is "the philosophy of science," *i.e.* the unification of science.



## THE OMNIPRESENT POWER

manifested in



6. *Classification of Sciences.*—How are these elements arranged? Into what classes?

These are the elements of science. Following Mr. Spencer, we have: (1) Abstract science. Its first division gives the laws of qualitative relations, the relations of kind or sort: logic. Its second gives the laws of quantitative relations, the relations of magnitude and number: mathematics. (2) Abstract-concrete science. Its first division gives the laws of the relations of force when exhibited in masses of matter: molar mechanics; its second division gives the laws of the relations of force exhibited in molecules: molecular mechanics. (3) Concrete science, which gives the laws of the relations of force exhibited in the redistribution of matter and motion actually going on. Under this head Mr. Spencer classes astronomy, geology, biology, and even psychology and sociology, and, I suppose, ethics. This redistribution results, on certain conditions in evolution, on certain other conditions, in dissolution; giving complex relations of relations, or laws of laws, or (the word is not Mr. Spencer's) *method*, which implies purpose, which, again, implies will.

7. *Interpretation of Science.*—What is the bearing of this on your subject?

You will see. The universe, including man, may be regarded as a whole, with a history past and to come, extending through as yet unnumbered millions of years. Science is constantly endeavouring to read that history



accurately, and, as we have seen, takes it for granted that accuracy is attainable; in other words, that truth is not an illusion. It also assumes the persistence of relations, or what is termed the uniformity of law, which we theologically translate into "the constancy of God." The universe is a manifestation of the omnipresent Power, and this Power science interprets in the light of mechanical and psychical law; Christ, in the light of moral and spiritual love. But Christ recognizes, in principle, the method of science; and science, when completely true to itself, recognizes Christ.

8.—*Summary.*—Thank you for all the pains you are taking. But would you mind summing it all up?

It is hardly necessary to show what only the less thoughtful scientific men, or scientific men in their less thoughtful moods, will deny, that under this great name of science are included beliefs as well as knowledges. Science really consists of philosophically classified observations, inferences, and beliefs, with respect to existences and their relations—observations, inferences, and beliefs which have been verified by appropriate tests, according to the nature of the several subjects. Probably this rather dry sentence will require a little reflection. But as we go on, and its meaning becomes clear, it will, perhaps, glisten with the dew of unexpected interest. Note the words "philosophically classified." Do not let them alarm you. Every man of sense is so far forth a scientist, every man of common sense is so far forth a philosopher. Philosophy and science have both their technicalities which demand special learning for their comprehension; but these are neither the heights nor the depths of philosophy and science. The heights and the depths are yours, they are the heights and depths of your every-day

life; like the kingdom of God they are among you and within you. Now, all science, from the most abstract to the most concrete, takes for granted that relations exist, and that they remain constant. In other words, without the implication or belief that constant relations obtain among the manifestations of the omnipresent Power, science could not exist; it reposes, throughout its entire extent, on the basal faith that, as regards its relations, the universe does not and will not deceive us. But what is this except faith in truth, of which right and beauty are but other sides? And as the universe is the manifestation of the omnipresent Power, then the truth in which we trust is the truth of that Power, *i.e.* the truth of God; its rightness, His rightness, its beauty, His beauty.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CHRIST'S RECOGNITION OF SCIENCE.

1. *Introduction.*—One of the things that strike me most in your lectures is that you continually claim science as on the side of Christianity, or, at least, of Christ. Now, I cannot altogether follow you there. Of course, I do not doubt that as the eternal Son was, and is, and ever will be, the Creator of all things, there can be no essential disagreement between His two revelations of Himself. But you seem to *demand* from science the recognition of Christ, which is appealing rather to knowledge than to faith, is it not?

Pardon me! Christianity, like science, appeals to knowledge as well as faith. I can easily show you that a great deal of science consists of beliefs dependent on the evidence of authoritative experts, and that the foundations of all science repose in the deep consciousness of ultimates, in which knowledge and faith are really one. But before going further into this, would it not be well to ask what was our Lord's own attitude towards science?

I confess I do not know what you mean. I thought there was no science in our Lord's time, and less than none in Judæa?

Perhaps there was more than you think. But whether there was science or not, there was knowledge, and there were principles of knowledge, and if we can discover our

Lord's attitude towards these, we can certainly determine His attitude towards science. I say, our Lord's attitude towards, not His acquisition of, science. His own knowledge—save in a limited degree—was direct, immediate, intuitional, not scientifically acquired. All the more reason for noting His attitude towards the scientific method.

But surely you do not mean to say that that *can* be discovered. I should not know where to find the necessary data!

In the Gospels. If your attention has not been called to the subject, I do not wonder at your surprise.

2. *Recognition of Reason.*—But do you mean to say that you can make ordinary audiences understand all this?

It may be difficult to say how far they understand and how far they only think they understand, but at all events they listen, as you yourself can bear witness.

Yes, and that astonishes me most of all. I do not think you could keep the attention of an audience of clergy! (Smiling.)

I do not suppose I could; but then there would not be much in my addresses that was new to them.

I am not so sure of that, and I wish you would treat me as a popular audience, and let me see how you would prove your point in this case.

Very well. Now note what is implied in the passages which follow: "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, repent ye; *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit: *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* . . . Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv 17.

exceeding glad: *for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*"<sup>1</sup> I am not asking you, at present, to come to any conclusion as to the reasoning here given; I only ask you to observe that it *is* reasoning. So also in the following: "And they forgot to take bread, and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned one with another, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus perceiving it, saith unto them, *Why reason ye, because you have no bread? do not ye yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?* When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? And they say unto Him, Seven. And He said unto them, *Do ye not yet understand?*"<sup>2</sup>

3. *Of Consciousness in General.*—I begin to comprehend, but I see no science as yet. I should rather call this philosophy?

Philosophy is indispensable to science. But wait a little. On looking into the above passages you will find seeing, hearing, perceiving, remembering, understanding, reasoning all present. You see, hear, perceive, remember, understand, reason, and you *know* that you see, hear, perceive, remember, understand, reason. The one fact stands for what is called consciousness, the other for what is called self-consciousness. Again, "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And those

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 14-21.



by the wayside are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock are they which, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.”<sup>1</sup> “And He said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”<sup>2</sup> “Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?”<sup>3</sup> “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive. How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not? Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings,

<sup>1</sup> Luke viii. 11-15.<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 25-27<sup>3</sup> John iii. 10-12.

how shall ye believe My words?"<sup>1</sup> "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."<sup>2</sup> Though the belief here spoken of is clearly more than intellectual assent, as, indeed, it very commonly is, yet, equally clearly, it includes that. We have, then, among the contents of consciousness to which Christ appeals seeing, hearing, perceiving, remembering, understanding, reasoning, believing, which may be taken as representing everything included in sensation and intellect.

4. *Of Righteous Love as a Principle.*—Once more. We have next certain facts of another kind. "But the Pharisees, when they heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? And He said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* This is the great and the first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets."<sup>3</sup> "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. *But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be*

<sup>1</sup> John v. 43-47.<sup>2</sup> John x. 37, 38.<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxii. 34-40.

*sons of the Most High: for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil.*"<sup>1</sup> "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, *even so do ye also unto them*: for this is the law and the prophets."<sup>2</sup> Here among the contents of consciousness is an authoritative principle of love in a sense which includes justice.

5. *Of Truth as a Principle.*—No one, certainly, ought to allow himself to speak ill of science. As a matter of fact, all men are scientific in some things; that is, they "judge a righteous judgment and not according to appearance," within certain narrow ranges of thought; and to be scientific all round is simply to have, in the language of the Prayer-book, a "right judgment in all things." What is it that science seeks? Truth. What *is* science? Rightly classified knowledge of the truth. So far, then, the object of Christ and the object of science are but two sides of one aim. "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."<sup>3</sup> "And this is life eternal that they should know Thee the only *true* God, and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> "Sanctify them in the *truth*, Thy word is truth."<sup>5</sup> "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of *truth*, is come, He shall guide you into all the *truth*."<sup>6</sup> "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples, and ye shall *know the truth*, and the *truth shall make you free*."<sup>7</sup>

6. *Of the Scientific Faculty.*—I suppose nothing need be said as to our Lord's recognition of truth as right and beauty, for this is universally admitted?

No. What is specially needed is the clear perception

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 31-35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>4</sup> John xvii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> John xvii. 17.

<sup>6</sup> John xvi. 13.

<sup>7</sup> John viii. 31, 32.

of our Lord's recognition of the scientific faculty and of the scientific method. A little study of His teaching will show that He took it for granted that His hearers had the faculty of science, and were under obligation to use that faculty in the interpretation and application of His words. "And He said to the multitudes also, When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat, and it cometh to pass . . . ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; *but how is it ye know not how to interpret this time? and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*"<sup>1</sup> To the Jews He said, "Are ye wroth with Me, because I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath? Judge not according to appearance, but judge a righteous judgment."<sup>2</sup> To His disciples He said, "Are ye also even yet without understanding?"<sup>3</sup> Take some more examples of His method: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. *But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*"<sup>4</sup> What is this but scientific reasoning? Or this, "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? *If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?*"<sup>5</sup> Let a man search the Gospels through with the one view

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 54-57.<sup>2</sup> John vii. 23, 24.<sup>3</sup> Matt. xv. 16.<sup>4</sup> Matt. vi. 28-30.<sup>5</sup> Matt. vii. 9-11.



of discovering how far Christ honoured the scientific faculty, and he can scarcely fail to be struck with astonishment that any one should have ever supposed Him to be an enemy of science. Because He was infinitely more than "scientific," we are in danger of overlooking, to our own great loss, how profoundly scientific He was. So far, then, the method of Christ sanctions the method of science.

Do not imagine that this is said as a "new thing." It is old enough. And do not fancy it is intended with "reservations" which take away its force. It is meant simply and frankly that every one, in proportion to opportunity, is bound to be scientific in order to be Christian—that failure to observe the method of science is so far forth failure to be a Christian. "Every one therefore which heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."<sup>1</sup> The wise man was the scientific; the foolish, the unscientific.

7. *Recognition of Law.*—I must admit that you are making out a strong case. But, surely, you do not suppose that our Lord would recognize the modern doctrine of law?

Not, certainly, as it is sometimes put. But, observe, the essential feature of the doctrine is the principle of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 24-27.



constancy. He recognizes the principle as Divine, and so does the man of science. For, if he is true to his own faith, he will confess that all phenomena and conditions of phenomena are manifestations of the omnipresent Power. Let me ask you now to ponder well the following and similar passages. "*He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.* For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye *therefore* shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." <sup>1</sup> Note how thoroughly the constancy of God in nature is assumed as a fact, whatever difficulty there may be in the interpretation of the fact. Again, "Now there were some present . . . which told Him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered and said unto them, *Think ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans*, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, *think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem?* I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." <sup>2</sup> Could there be a plainer statement of the uniformity of law, which is but another name for the constancy of God, than that here given? But consider our Lord's personal attitude towards Divinely appointed conditions. Does He ask that law may be suspended in His favour? that the Divine will may be changed in order that He may escape from pain? Only in such terms as but render more emphatic His

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 45-48.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 1-5.

teaching that it is for the heart of man to resign itself to the will of God. "And He came out, and went, as His custom was unto the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him . . . and He was parted from them about a stone's cast; and He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; *nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.*"<sup>1</sup> Here, then, is distinct recognition of the steadfastness of the Divine purpose—the fixity of Divine conditions—in the midst of suffering that might occasion question of the goodness or the power of God. But this question, natural as it would be to thousands, seems never, for an instant, to have shaken Him. Even the one expression so often quoted cannot reasonably be thought of in that light: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"<sup>2</sup> It may well be that He had but commenced to repeat, as He must often have done before, one of the psalms,<sup>3</sup> when the growing agony of crucifixion took away for the time the power of speech. In any case, the words imply no doubt of God, being but the natural expression of the emotion of a soul around whom had gathered with fearful force, in the closing darkness of death, the darker mystery of evil. We know, however, from S. Matthew and S. Mark that, later, "Jesus uttered a loud voice,"<sup>4</sup> and from S. John and S. Luke what that voice was: "It is finished;"<sup>5</sup> "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."<sup>6</sup> According, then, to the Gospel story, as regards absolute trust in the Cause of the universe—the Cause of all phenomena—we have in Jesus Christ the most complete example of the highest type of the scientific spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 39-42.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37.

<sup>5</sup> John xix. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xxiii. 46.

If any one is unable to accept His interpretation of God, it cannot be on the ground that truth was not His object, or that He did not live the truth He taught.

But are there not some seeming exceptions to His recognition of the fixity of Divine conditions ?

Perhaps. There is, indeed, one perplexing passage which some have construed as at variance with our Lord's usual recognition of law : "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> Whatever this may mean, caprice is certainly excluded. "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone ? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ?"<sup>2</sup> In like manner He puts plainly before His followers the unalterable conditions of discipleship. "And He called unto Him the multitude with His disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life ? For what should a man give in exchange for his life ?"<sup>3</sup> Obedience there must be : without that, failure ; with that,

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 9-13.

<sup>3</sup> Mark viii. 34-37.

success, is certain. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be our ultimate conclusion as to our Lord's interpretation of the omnipresent Cause, it is manifest that He recognized, and taught His disciples to recognize, fixity of conditions, uniformity of law, which, as we have said, is but another name for the constancy of God. Thus, then, as regards the recognition of truth, of the scientific faculty, of the uniformity of law, Christ clearly recognizes the great principles of science.

8. *Relation to other Teachers.*—A point occurs to me which may or may not be relevant; but it does seem to me that if you take specially chosen passages from any great teacher, Socrates, for example, you might find the same recognition?

Undoubtedly. In the Vedas, in the wisdom of Gautama Buddha, in the teaching of Confucius, and, in a word, in all true teachings, anywhere and everywhere. But, then, *they* derived their truth from *Him*, not as incarnate in Judæa, but as the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The eternal Son of God is for us the source of truth of all kinds; and the point which I wish to emphasize at present is, that, in His manifestation in the flesh, He explicitly or implicitly recognizes the principles which He Himself has given to the world of science. It follows from this, that the authority of the Bible and Church, on the one hand, and of science and the scientific world, on the other, are, finally, the authority of the Son of God. If the two authorities should appear to differ,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 28-30.



that would be no reason for rejecting either; it would be a reason for questioning *our interpretation* in particular cases. It is, however, important to remember that these are not rivals externally opposed. You cannot segregate men and thought into Church and Bible, scientific world and science. The same man is or ought to be at once a man of the Bible and a man of science, a member of the Church and a member of the scientific world; and in both a worshipper of the Son of God. But, just as conscience and faith rank higher in human nature and are, *fundamentally*, more trustworthy than reason and proof, so must the Church and the Bible take rank before, and be, *fundamentally*, more authoritative than the scientific world and science. Yet there should be neither without the other, else religion may burn into superstition and science freeze into scepticism. Note, also, that, in root, one is not more Divine than the other, since the source of both is the Son of God, Creator of the universe and Redeemer of the world; but yet that one is more important than the other, at least until the restitution of all things; for to us, as world of science, the Son gives the many things needed—His gifts; but to us, as Church of Christ, He gives us the *one* thing needful—Himself.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SOME SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

1. *Introduction.*—There are two or three points, more or less scientific, on which I should like to have your opinion. They have very serious bearings on life ; but it is not with reference to consequences only ; but also, to truth, I want you to treat them. Take, for example, the Divine Personality. You have already dealt with the subject from another standpoint, but I would like a little fuller statement, in view of present-day questionings ?

Let me first of all say how glad I am that you put it in that way. It is quite right to bear in mind the gravity of the issues involved. But we must take care not to make the consequences of rejection a ground for belief. Let me answer you, however, in the words of my Rhyl Congress Paper. Among Jews, for example, as I have read, and among Unitarians and so-called agnostics, as I know, one finds men and women of high character and gracious spirit ; and you cannot, in their case, say, with any advantage, “You are to believe the Catholic Faith because of its bearing on individual life.” Nor is it well, even to men of lower type, to address such words as these : “Sirs, you are to believe in the Divine Personality, because if you do not you will be very uncomfortable in this life, and still more so in the life to come.” The importance of any

statement presented for belief is a reason for directing attention to the subject, and the great influence the belief would have on life may make the subject take the first rank in interest; but for the belief itself there can be but one justification. From the least to the most weighty of statements, whether their influence on life is trifling or immense, there can be but one allowable reason for belief, and that is their truth.

It is well to bear in mind the other side also. The Jew, Unitarian, or so-called agnostic, may point with pardonable pride to the examples of unselfish life and beneficent influence that they are able to present to the world. But the munificence of Jewish philanthropists does not prove that the Messiah did not come. The pure ethical philosophy of Unitarian theologians does not prove that the Son of God is not God the Son. The devotion to truth within their special range of knowledge, or the splendid achievements within their peculiar sphere of labour, on the part of agnostic scientists, does not prove untrue the statement: "The Power manifested in all phenomena is not *less* than Personal." There can be no justifiable reason for the rejection of any proposition except that it is perceived to be false, or for hesitation in receiving it except that it is not perceived to be true.

Every morally thoughtful man will, on reflection, admit that it is desirable to distinguish between truth and importance. Yet, on both the sceptical and the Christian side, one finds the distinction constantly overlooked, to the great confusion of the issues involved. For example, the quietness of the Christian death is often cited as a reason for accepting, and the other-worldliness of the Christian life as a reason for rejecting, the Christian religion. One may suppose that in both cases there is

in the background of consciousness a feeling that one is testing religion by its fruits; but what is immediately before the mind is advantage or disadvantage, not truth or untruth.

2. *The Divine Personality*.—Thank you. But to come to the question, How do you deal with it?

We must take care to indicate clearly what belief and what personality we intend; otherwise, may it not be truly said that belief in Divine Personality of some sort has always existed in the world, and therefore co-existed with all the vices and crimes of mankind? It may be answered, The belief did not produce the crimes. Perhaps not; yet, in its bearing on individual life, it was too weak to prevent the crimes. But are there no cases where the crime was the manifest result of the belief? Would not even a short list of those who thought they were doing God service by murderous outrages on their fellow-men fill you with horror? No, we cannot undertake to defend every belief in a Divine Personality. The one defensible Faith is—*the belief that Christ required in the God that Christ revealed.*

And, as the acknowledged possibility of mixed belief may suggest, we have to study truth qualitatively and quantitatively. We have to ask of any statement, In what sense is it true? How far is it true? But, in doing this, the first thing is to disentangle the essential proposition, and keep steadfastly to that. Thus, in the present instance, the limitation of the subject, whose truth we desire to set forth, to the Personality of the God of Christ, frees us from responsibility for the influence of beliefs, which, whether in themselves ill or well founded, are not a necessary part of the Christianity of Christ. We are not, as believers in the God of Christ, bound to give,

for the hope that is in us, a reason in the technical terms of philosophy and theology. We are not under obligation to have arrived at settled convictions as to what may be meant by the Infinite, the Absolute, the Unconditioned of the one, or the Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience of the other. The reason for belief in the God of Christ is—Christ Himself. To the Jew, to the Unitarian, to the so-called agnostic, we have one and the same answer—Christ. You cannot account for Him without arriving at the Catholic Faith; and we ask you to accept that Faith, not because of its bearing on your life, but because it is true.

Yet, as the influence of a creed may be an element in the evidence on its behalf, may not a legitimate use be made of the bearing of belief in the Divine Personality on individual life?

Yes; two examples may be given—

(1) There can be no question that he who is able to accept our Lord's interpretation of Divine Providence as individual, as well as universal, will, so far forth, live a comparatively strong and happy life. In the great majority of cases men become sceptics, not because of scholarly difficulties, but because of the seeming impossibility of reconciling their experiences of life with any reasonable conception, I will not say of Divine Justice, but of Divine Love; and because of the gravely significant fact that Christians, who profess to believe Christ's interpretation of God, do not usually appear to derive, in periods of outward adversity, any great comfort from their faith, or to be less keenly eager for merely worldly advantage than other men. It is needless to point out how completely such a man's life would be changed if he really believed the words of our Lord: "Are not two



sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." That such a faith would make one calm, strong, and brave, is not of itself a complete justification of the belief, but it affords a certain presumption in favour of its truth.

(2) I have no disposition to challenge the accuracy of statements one reads and hears about men who never appear to be troubled by any feeling of moral impotence, or to have any consciousness of their own guilt before God. For anything I know to the contrary, these may be among the righteous whom the Son of Man did not come to call to repentance. But for ordinary men like myself the question of sin is, from the hour we begin to seriously think about it until it is settled, the really supreme problem of life. For my own part, I am perfectly conscious of two things, of which the first is that I have sinned willingly, and am so far guilty; and the other, that I have sinned unwillingly, and am so far impotent. I am not concerned to inquire what is the precise height of the guilt, or the exact depth of the impotence. Whatever it is, it is too much. I do not feel it any exaggeration to cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Is it necessary, in such a case as this, to point out the bearing of the belief that should be able to reply, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"? Such considerations are more than incentives to study; they are elements in the evidence itself. Nay, more, when we come to the argument arising out of spiritual experience, such evidence as this becomes of high scientific value. It does not settle questions of scholarship, but it shows the reality of the



spiritual force, and of the change of spiritual relation, by which the impotent and guilty soul passes from the imprisonment of a living death into the glorious liberty of the "children of God."

3. *The Right Method.*—What advice would you give me as to the method?

Try to realize in your own mind the real nature of the difficulty others feel, and meet it as frankly and fully as you can. Regard the scoffs, sneers, and jests you may hear from their lips as symptoms of an inner unrest which you are, if possible, to reach; and try to shake off, as unworthy of you, every desire to gain a mere argumentative triumph over your opponent. Take as the first illustration that fearful word—anthropomorphism. Now many sceptics sincerely believe that the doctrine of the Divine Personality is anthropomorphic, and *therefore* untrue. In dealing with such an opponent, ascertain to begin with what *he* means by the word. Often, you will find, what he has in his thoughts as the teaching of the Church is really no part of the Catholic Faith at all. Make this clear to him, however long it may take, and you will have won your man. I speak from experience. I have talked to hundreds of men who were sceptics for reasons easily removed by those who are themselves content with the Catholic Faith, and have sympathy enough to understand *how* men become sceptics. Let us now suppose it is not simply to gross material anthropomorphism, but to its highest and most spiritual forms, that your opponent objects. How will you deal with him? Is your sympathy deep enough and patient enough to deal with one who finds fault with what seems to yourself so pure, so noble, so manifestly true? If it is, then ask him to consider whether he has really grasped

what his own position involves. Is it not your implication, you may say, that whatever is anthropomorphic cannot be true of God? You have then some idea of God with which you make the comparison. What is that idea? As you have it, is it not anthropomorphic? An anthropomorphic idea of God is not, then, necessarily false. I am not over fond of dilemmas, but does it not follow that your own idea of God must either be false because it is anthropomorphic, or true notwithstanding its anthropomorphism? But consider a little farther. Is there not some confusion of the idea and its object? Is space or time anthropomorphic? Yet your *idea* of space or time must be, since you are a man. Do you imagine that by calling God the "Inscrutable Power" you can avoid the difficulty? But is not "inscrutability" an anthropomorphic idea? Is not "Power" an anthropomorphic experience? The choice, then, is simply between lower and higher forms of anthropomorphism. And surely it is more justifiable to believe that God is not less than the highest we can think Him than to limit His glory to the solitary idea of power! But, you say, Power is the Ultimate of Ultimates, and thus is the highest. Be it so. Then we do not differ. The Ultimate of Ultimates, the Inscrutable Power, cannot be less than Personal, that is intelligent, conscious, volitional. If your "Power" includes all I mean by God, the difference between us is one of name only. What, however, you have a right to say is: There is an unjustifiable anthropomorphism. What I have a right to say is: There is a justifiable anthropomorphism. The former I ought not to defend, the latter you ought not to attack. When Mr. Spencer says the choice is not between Personality and something lower, but between Personality and something higher, he

covers the ground I take. I ask you to rise *as high as* the Personal, and remain there until you get the "something higher."

Another illustration has reference to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Settled belief in this aspect of the Divine Personality so manifestly rests on the evidence of the Holy Scriptures, that I should be constrained to confess arguments with those who did not believe in the Bible to be of little use. Nevertheless, as every one who has had much direct experience of sceptics knows, it is of great importance to show that difficulties are not peculiar to Christianity; and that even this mystery of the Divine Existence has a certain parallel in our most familiar experience. Take in your hand any particle and, if you treat it scientifically, you must find there matter, motion, and force. You cannot take away one and leave two, or two and leave one. Wherever one is the others are, wherever the others are the one is. They are three in one; but matter is not motion nor force, motion is not matter nor force, force is not matter nor motion. When an opponent says he will not believe the incomprehensible, try to realize, and get him to realize, precisely what he means. What he probably intends is, *he cannot believe the meaningless*—a totally different proposition from "I will not believe the incomprehensible." To him this trinity in unity of matter, motion, and force is incomprehensible, but not meaningless. The man who will believe nothing that he cannot comprehend will find that his creed may be translated by "I believe in nothing;" but he is quite right in requiring that the necessity to believe the incomprehensible shall not be made an excuse for demanding his assent to the meaningless. Make it clear to him that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not meaningless; then

half his difficulty will have vanished, and he will be ready to follow your proof that the doctrine is true.

Of the Theistic position, Jews and Unitarians are the best representatives. As to both, it is not in what they affirm so much as in what they deny, that our difference is to be found. Let it be remembered that all good comes from the same source, and that if He who was God manifest in the flesh has created in them some noble types of character much in advance of what we should expect from the limitations of their creed, it is to the Son of God, and not to the limitations, we must give the glory. I do not hesitate to say the same of so-called agnostics. They and we derive our good from the same source. For the virtues of the agnostic I thank the Son of God, not agnosticism. I have said "so-called agnostics," because I do not believe there are any real ones. We have heard much, and I hope we shall hear more, of the inconsistencies of believers. What about the inconsistencies of unbelievers? Unbelievers are inconsistent in being so largely Christian, we in being so largely unchristian; and, as their inconsistencies are more creditable, so are they more permanent than ours. Indeed, I doubt if there is a pure agnostic in the universe. If there is, what would I not give for the loan of him! With his aid as "awful example," I would undertake to convert all the rest. I will not weary you with proof I gave in full to the Manchester Congress, but the fact is that, in any intelligible sense of the word, there are no agnostics. Even if there were, we could not do much more than conjecture what would be the bearing of their position on their life. It would be interesting to trace the effect of pure agnosticism; but the experiment is not to be looked for. Where Christianity is *not*, no one is able or wishes



to try it; where Christianity *is* there may be the wish, but not the power. Nowhere in the world is there a life untouched by the Spirit of Christ within, while, from without, the influence of Christianity, in Christian countries, streams in like the air.

The difficulty as to the Divine Personality is not, however, confined to sceptics. I will not presume to speak for others, but I fear that in my own case it has arisen from a certain selfishness, and the blindness that selfishness produces. It seems, looking back on my life, as if I wanted God to make Himself less great than He is; as if the Divine Personality was too large for my egotism; as if the gifts that came regularly were somehow not *His* gifts. I had fallen into that miserable misconception of uniform method which regards it as opposed to will, and hence looked on the laws of life and force as a veil that hid God, not as a gracious revealing of His ways of working. I was not content to pray and to receive the answer according to law—though I knew there were laws of prayer laid down in the New Testament—I wanted God to come within the grasp of my finiteness, instead of giving up myself to His infiniteness. I failed to see that if God came to me only in some sharply defined ways, I must regard all other ways as empty of Him; that, on the contrary, if I received Him, it must be as the fulness that filleth all in all. I suppose the difficulty must remain while selfishness remains. Until we are able to see God in everything, there must always be some danger of our seeing Him in nothing. A will that is large enough to embrace the universe must be invisible while self, in its terrible nearness, rises above the height of our eyes. There is no escape from the difficulty except by escape from self. But when we have exchanged the



poverty of self for the wealth of God; when, in the humility which is the consciousness of the infinite of Love, all our littleness has disappeared, the difficulty will have vanished too.

4. *Our Lord's Knowledge.*—Have you arrived at any conclusion on the perplexing question of our Lord's knowledge?

I do not think the time has come for the closing of that question. But I will tell you frankly what has been passing in my own mind on the subject. To begin with, I think it is far too summary a way of disposing of the question to say that our Lord's knowledge was the "knowledge of His times." That statement might be true in one sense, and yet have all the misleading effect of a statement wholly false. I will work up gradually to the point I wish to make prominent. You know that in what is called hypnotism one mind obtains control over another. It is very mysterious in some ways, but there is no question, I believe, about the fact. You are aware also, that Professor Huxley, while not admitting "demoniac possession," because of what he deems the inadequacy of the evidence, does not know of anything in science which would entitle us to say that it could not be. You will admit also that, so far forth, there is no impossibility of *angelic* possession. Suppose, by way of illustration only, an angel willed to live as man, and for this purpose entered into a human being and, with his continuous assent, lived through him a human life. Suppose, moreover, that the action of the angel on the man was uninterrupted; then, nothing that the man said or did could be the man's alone. Every thought, feeling, action, word, being penetrated and used by the angel, with the continuous concurrence of the man, could not be ascribed exclusively

to either the angel or the man, but to the one complex personality which we may call the angel-man.

To simplify the problem as much as possible, let us suppose the man to have never sinned, to be, in fact, in the human sense, perfectly good, but to be *in every other way* subject to all the natural conditions of human life, growth, development, progress. Now let us take it for granted that the angel knew many things which the man did not and could not know simply as man. One limitation, arising out of the nature of the case, the angel would thus impose upon himself. He could express nothing of all he knew unless its expression was within the power of human language. Another would be that he could communicate nothing to the man unless it was within human capacity to receive it. Yet another would be that he could do nothing through the man that was not within human power so reinforced. Yet one more would be that he should use the man subject to the ordinary conditions of learning, of growth in wisdom and power, alternate periods of activity and repose, and generally what we know as the ordinary states of human life, except as affected by personal sin. And this, not because it would be impossible to free the man from some of his usual restrictions without destroying his manhood, but because he willed to live as an ordinary man with only certain exceptions necessary to the purpose for which he came. In such a case the angel, in his human manifestation, and *as* angel-man, in his complete complex personality, would know and could know nothing that was incommunicable to the man. But if his becoming man was for a specific purpose only, then, whatever lay outside of that purpose, though in itself communicable, and though known to him as angel alone, would not be

known to him as angel-man. This would be included in the limitations to which he subjected himself, partly in becoming human, partly in becoming human for a specific purpose. Now, we cannot say off-hand how much a man so possessed by an angel would or could know. We can see there would be limitations, but what, within those limitations, would be possible cannot be easily ascertained. But, at least, even were we entitled, which I do not admit, to regard him as speaking or acting, at times as man only, yet his knowledge could not be in any sense merely the "knowledge of his times." It might be that, but it could not, even as man, be merely that, but such knowledge as it is possible for a man possessed by an angel to acquire, from without, with the aid of angelically reinforced faculty, or, from within, by direct communication. But I do not, as I have said, admit that we could legitimately speak of him in that way, unless we meant that the angel from time to time did not use him, in which case he would cease for the time being to be the angel-man.

It does not of itself absolutely follow that the angel-man could or could not make mistakes. That would depend upon whether or no the liability to mistakes was one of the limitations to which the angel willed to subject himself. If, however, there were mistakes, we cannot get rid of the difficulty by saying that he was mistaken merely as human, unless, as I have said, he was sometimes not the angel-man. If we do suppose this, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, in many cases, to know which of the two—the angel-man or the man only—was speaking. And the same difficulty would arise as to his actions. If he could speak mistakenly, why not act mistakenly? If some of his actions were merely

human, how are we to know which of them were angel-human? I do not, so far, say there were no mistakes, for bearing the pain of making mistakes *might* have been included in his purpose of living humanly, but only that we cannot rightly get rid of the difficulty by attributing them to the man alone; they must have been, in the nature of the case, the mistakes of the one personality, or else he was not truly and constantly an angel-man. Unless, then, it was made very clear by himself that the liability to mistakes was included in his mission, or unless the evidence from other sources was absolutely decisive, I should refuse to believe that, as a matter of fact, he had ever been mistaken at all.

5. *The Real Question.*—The question of limitation of knowledge does not arise. That, of course, is assumed?

Yes. To leave our illustration and come to the question, no one supposes that the man Christ knew, or could know, all that was known by the Eternal Son. Even if we, unnecessarily, I think, imagined that He knew, not simply in principle (which, I believe, He did), but also in detail (which I think He did not), all that is known to men of science to-day, still it is not pretended that He was as a man omniscient. Nor is it, on the other hand, denied that God the Son knew necessarily more than is communicable to man. But as the God-Man—as the Son of God become the Son of man—was He omniscient? If the principles here set forth be true, then we must hold that in His one Personality as the Lord Jesus Christ He knew only what was communicable, and what was involved in His incarnation to communicate, to His human mind. How much this was, who can say? The possibilities of communication must have been immense, as the fact that we have revealed through the medium of His



human mind the will and character of God, sufficiently proves. All we are able to say is, His knowledge must have fallen short of omniscience, or else the Incarnation was not real. It is a question I have not seen discussed; but surely the truth of the Incarnation implies the attribution of like limitation to His power? Immense the power of the Eternal Son, even when acting through this human limitation, must have been, as His mighty deeds abundantly show. All one dare say is, that that power must have been, in its incarnate use, less than omnipotence. Limitation of knowledge, however, does not of itself imply the actual making of mistakes, nor does the absence of mistakes necessarily lessen the reality of the Incarnation, in the sense of God becoming *man*. But the presence of mistakes would tend, unless it could be shown that liability to error was a part of the burden God the Son willed to bear in becoming human, to diminish the reality of the Incarnation in the sense of *God* becoming man. Unless, therefore, our Lord Himself told us that bearing the pain of mistake-making was a part of the purpose for which He came, or unless the evidence from other sources was altogether decisive, we ought, I think, to refuse to believe, as in the case of the angel-man, that He was ever mistaken at all.

I must, however, ask you to remember the great difference between our Lord's human consciousness and that of other men. How it would transform our lives if we had, as He, an unbroken consciousness of God; and not unbroken only, but unshadowed by sin and doubt! Remember how little, in the best sense, we are conscious of ourselves, and therefore of man. In Him, in His human mind, was complete consciousness of what He Himself was and man might be. We are *ourselves* only occasionally, and then incompletely; He was Himself always and com-



pletely. The great principles of God we feel but now and again, and partially; in Him they were permanent elements of consciousness, and shone with uninterrupted light. We realize something of the strength of God in us from time to time; in Him the feeling of Divine Power filled every faculty, and was constant. In us love comes in gleams, and quickly passes; in Him it suffused the whole being, and never ceased. In short, He was perfect God, filling, and flowing through, perfect man.

I am not sure how far your answer meets the question that is really in my mind. Perhaps what I want to ask is, Did He or did He not know who was the author of the 110th psalm?

Let us first consider the involved principle as it affects the attitude of any true teacher towards errors. Not much need be said concerning those with which he has immediately to deal. He can tolerate these only the more surely to end their existence, in the sense in which the general of an army tolerates the advance of the foe until he has taken up a position from which there is no retreat. Or, to change the figure, the teacher bears with the errors of the taught as the rising sun bears with the darkness it drives away. Errors of this kind may be called "opposed errors," in the sense that they are those which are directly contrary to the truth he has to teach.

Then there are those which arise not so much from distorted knowledge as from simple ignorance when the mind is opening to the truth. These, from another point of view, may be called "incidental," but, as regards their relation to the teacher, they are borne with because they will gradually disappear as the truth is better understood, and to spend labour and time on the destruction of misapprehensions which are dying of themselves would be a

waste of energy. These may be called, from the teacher's standpoint, "tolerated errors."

There remain all the errors which belong to other departments of thought, and with which the teacher is not directly concerned to deal. It does not belong to the physicist to correct errors in biology, nor to the chemist to set right mistakes in political economy. Every teacher, if he would be successful in his own sphere, must neglect the errors, even if he knows them to exist, which may be found in branches of study remote from his own. And of those which come more nearly to his own branch, he can only deal with the few that have a direct bearing on what he has to teach. All the rest he must neglect. From this point of view these may be termed "ignored errors."

Now comes the question, What, on the supposition that the teacher himself does not share the errors of his age, ought to be his attitude towards those who do? It will be granted that he is not called upon to correct these except in so far as this may be necessary to his special teaching. On that point there can be no difference of opinion. But is he bound to avoid the use of such language as might seem to *after ages* to imply his own belief in the erroneous view? I say to after ages, because, on the supposition made, no difficulty could arise in his own time. Let us imagine that in the days of Socrates men still supposed the sun to set in the west, but that he himself knew better. It is agreed that, as his purpose was to teach more important things, he was not under obligation to waste his time in trying to make men understand that the sun did not set at all. If, on such subjects, he used the common terms of daily life, no one but himself could have any difficulty in the matter, for no one else would, by supposition, know that the popular opinion

was erroneous. On that subject, therefore, error would not be increased by his uncorrected use of common terms.

Let us take another illustration. Imagine that the real author of "Hamlet" was not Shakespeare, but Lord Bacon, and that this fact had come to the knowledge of no one except Dr. Johnson. Imagine that, in conversation, Shakespeare was quoted as having said so-and-so in "Hamlet," there being no reference, which, in the case supposed, could not have arisen, to the authorship, but only to what the author said. Would Dr. Johnson have been morally bound to refrain from referring to "Shakespeare in Hamlet," though he could not otherwise have made his hearers know to what play he was referring? It is not an easy question to answer. It must be admitted that no charge of adding a hair's breadth to existing error could be brought against him, if he had, not as a question of authorship, but simply as a means of identification, incidentally referred to "Shakespeare in Hamlet." Nor could he be blamed for not imparting the truth on the subject which he alone knew, if to do so would have involved the neglect of more important matter.

The question, then, is not one of what a man owes to others, since in the case supposed he does not create or increase, and is not under obligation to remove, may be rather under obligation not to remove, the error. It is a question of what he owes to his own conscience or to God. It seems as if, in such a case, one would, if possible, avoid the subject altogether. And this might possibly be done, if the subjects on which he alone was truly informed were few, and of infrequent recurrence. But it is easy to imagine the case of a teacher who, on a multitude of common and constantly recurring subjects, was far better

informed than those about him. In such a case he must either scarcely open his lips at all, or use language open to the later technical objection that it implied "sanction" of beliefs that he knew not to be true. Of course, in the imaginary case given above, there would remain the alternative that Boswell, having himself no shadow of doubt that Shakespeare was the author of "Hamlet," unconsciously attributed the same belief to Johnson. Perfectly honest misquotations of what another has said are amongst the very commonest phenomena of literature. We have here a principle to which due weight must be given in answering the question, To whom, if mistakes are found, must they be attributed? But it is important to notice the limited sphere of the principle. If we suppose a teacher in whom is no error, who is incapable of making a mistake, then, he must perceive, beyond himself, the error that penetrates every department of thought, the mistakes constantly made by all sorts and conditions of men. It is not his purpose or mission to correct all; it is his purpose or mission to impart special truth. But as common error is involved in all the language it is possible to use, he must of necessity appear to after ages, so far as they have discovered the inaccuracy of the earlier beliefs, to imply some sanction of the common errors of his time—until they remember that on no other condition was it possible to teach at all. It would appear, then, that a teacher ought not, from any motive, to convey an error on the subject of his teaching, but is not bound to correct the errors already imbedded in illustrations he incidentally uses, so long as these do not affect the special truth he has to impart.

Now as regards the application of this there are four verbally intelligible suppositions.



1. The first is that David *was* the author of the psalm in question.

2. The second is that there is an error in the evangelical report, and that our Lord did not use the precise words attributed to Him.

3. That our Lord knew that David *was not* the writer of the psalm, but simply reasoned with others on the basis of their own belief.

4. That our Lord shared the error of His age, if error it was, in supposing David to have been the author.

On the first supposition no difficulty arises. The second is so improbable that it need not be considered. The third supposition is possibly the true one. Even if it does not apply in this case, the principle that the use of an illustration in which an error is imbedded does not imply "sanction" of the error, will apply in other cases. If the fourth supposition be adopted it must be on the ground that to bear the pain of liability to error was involved in the purpose of the Incarnation. Personally, I incline to a combination of the third and fourth views. Without attributing to our Lord *human* omniscience, which would be a case of man becoming God, not of God becoming man, it is yet certain that our Lord's human knowledge must have been, from the influence of his spiritual knowing on the other kinds of knowing, incomparably above "the knowledge of the time" on many questions not usually regarded as involved in the purpose of the Incarnation. But it does not seem probable that this overflowing influence of the spiritual would of itself prevent common mistakes in such matters as the authorship and dates of books. On the theory I have endeavoured to set forth under the illustration of the angel-man, such knowledge, if it existed, must have been



pecially communicated, *i.e.* it would not be the *necessary* result of the Incarnation as a fact. Our view of such a question must turn on what we hold the purpose of the Incarnation to include.

Does not, at least, one passage imply that there was some limitation of the *Divine* knowledge of our Lord?

I doubt whether we have any right, in the case of the text to which you refer, to regard the Son as exclusively either the Son of God or the Son of man. Surely it is equivalent to what we mean by the "Lord Jesus Christ." In that case, as the Lord Jesus Christ, He did not know. As man he could not, unless it was communicated, and such communication was evidently not made. As to the power of God not to know—that is, to deliberately become unconscious of certain things, I have myself no doubt; but it is not a subject on which I dare say more, nor does it seem necessary to the question in hand.

6. *Christian and "Scientific" Views of the Earth and Man.*—I often hear it said that the importance which Christianity attaches to the earth and to man, however natural in the times of ignorance, is altogether exaggerated in the light of modern geological and astronomical discoveries. The immense extension in space is equalled, or more than equalled, by the prolonged extension in time which those discoveries necessitate in our ideas of the universe. What is your view of this?

As to geology not much need be said. The greater antiquity of man does not lessen either his importance or that of his home. Had geology discovered some nobler race of beings inhabiting the earth, we should have had to consider how that fact ought to influence our estimate of man. As to astronomy, I have yet to learn that

astronomers have discovered anything greater than themselves. I quite grant the danger of self-exaggeration on our part, but science, when Godless, rather increases than lessens that danger. On the one hand, had it the power, which, in the nature of the case, it has not and cannot have, to limit our life to the earth, and so degrade our destiny, yet, on the other hand, it makes up for the infliction of that humiliation by an enormous access of self-glorification. For if we may not attribute the marvellous glory of modern discoveries to God, then there is nothing for it but to attribute that glory to ourselves. We dethrone the one God of the universe and convert the world of science into a republic of gods. If, however, the objection is intended only to indicate an enlarged idea of the greatness of God, we must regard the objector from a different point of view. He may, in that case, find a true expression of his feeling, with greater objective occasion, in the words of the Psalmist: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the Son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Is, then, the importance attached in the Bible to man, and, indirectly, to his dwelling-place, unworthy of the greatness of God?

How we shall answer that question will depend on our idea of what constitutes greatness. If our notion is a carriage and pair, or a great many carriages and pairs, and a multitude of servants, for example, then, probably, we shall find the objection unanswerable. But if we agree with the Creator's own estimate of greatness, that it is nobler to serve than to be served—for the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—then the difficulty vanishes. We see that, in the Divine order,

power waits on wisdom and wisdom waits on love. But, in fact, it is the alternative view that belittles God. Not only does it imply a false idea of greatness, but it does itself limit that greatness. In our view, the love of God for man is boundless, as it must be, if the *Infinite* love at all. God's greatness is, therefore, immeasurable. But, on the other view, God is to attach much smaller importance to man; the importance is to be reduced to the measuring-rod of the scientist; and thus, in measuring man, we presume to measure God.

The full corrective of the tendency to self-exaggeration on man's part is to be found, not in the scientific manifestation of the omnipresent Power, but in the self-revelation of God in Christ. In His presence the problem is solved. Humility is not so much the consciousness of our littleness as it is the consciousness of God's greatness. The importance attached to man is proof, not of the grandeur of man, but of the infiniteness of God's love. Moreover, his peculiar importance is not very flattering to his vanity; it is that of an invalid. For, of all the members of a household, the one that is sick is, directly, the least useful, but, for the time, the most important. The others move softly about and speak with bated breath until the sickness is gone, with the return of health or the coming of death. Now, Christ represents the universe as peopled by spiritual beings, other parts of the one Divine family, profoundly interested in the sick member. You recollect the ninety and nine. *Why* is there more joy over the finding of the one that is lost than over the ninety and nine? Because each of them was deeply moved by the wanderer's sin, and could not breathe freely until he was brought back or had ceased to be! I believe, indeed, that a hush has fallen on the spiritual universe, and will

remain until the work of human redemption has reached its end in life or death.

7. *The Everlasting Future*.—But in which will it reach its end? Why not in both?

I would gladly believe that the end will be life only. I can think of but two ways in which "the harmony of the universe" can be restored. In a choir, if there be one who sings out of tune, he destroys *the perfection of the choir*. You may, perhaps, restore the harmony by turning out the offending member. But if the choir is as large as the universe, you cannot adopt that method. There is nowhere to turn him into. Besides, we must remember the problem goes beyond the choir. A man cannot be turned out of the infinite, he cannot be turned out of God. That, then, is not one of the possible ways. But you may silence him. In the universe-choir, that can be done only by the silence of death—utter and absolute cessation of movement. A single pulsation of sin would destroy the harmony. I confess my whole soul rises against that idea. I cannot bring myself to think of space as the sepulchre of dead souls. Thinkable or not, it would have to be the silence of annihilation—annihilation, at least, of all spirit-form, of all conscious and recognizable being. An eternal hell, if recognizable or known to exist, means eternal limitation of the happiness of heaven. The disharmony must somehow utterly and for ever disappear. Of course, "annihilation" would secure that, but, I fear, it would leave a vacant place. The universe would always be the ninety and nine; never again the hundred. I would, then, I might believe that the other will be the way. I mean the way of life. I should like to be allowed to think that our sin had helped to save the ninety and nine, that the horror and the shame



of it, and, above all, the perception of what it cost the Redeemer, kept them from choosing our evil path; and that in the end we, all of us, learning at last what we had done, might be moved to cry out hereafter if not here for the Saviour, and hope that one day we should be absolutely purified, completely restored, and all sin vanish for ever from the universe, that this should be the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, without shade or shadow of its opposite. Only, alas! while this is what I long to believe, and, perhaps, in deepest heart do believe, yet I admit there are weighty passages against as well as for, and how to decide I know not. And, of course, I see that one cannot ignore a certain self-determining power in man, without which whatever else he might be, *man* he would not be; and, therefore, though he might conceivably be forced into formal obedience, he could not be coerced into holiness. But, as there must be, in the end, harmony, eternal punishment, if there is no escaping that doctrine, must be eternal extinction of conscious being, and, therefore, of every discord. This, I grant, does not rise to the height of the predicted victory of Christ, and falls short of the complete destruction of the works of the devil, for there seems no way of accomplishing that, except by universal salvation—including the turning, the regeneration, the sanctification of the worker himself. If some passages imply this, others imply the opposed view. Must faith be daring enough to believe at once the continuous existence of evil and the ultimate triumph of good? Perhaps there are those who regard good as sufficiently triumphant in witnessing the conscious misery of the wicked! I *cannot* take that view. It seems to me fundamentally opposed to the character and mission of the world's Redeemer. If, therefore, I must, as I fear,



hold to eternal punishment, I can only regard it as the eternal extinction of the finally impenitent sinner. And if I cannot regard most of the texts on the subject as affording hope of ultimate restoration, I think they may be justly interpreted as meaning the ultimate and absolute cessation of conscious being. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt to the believer in Christ that man is related to the entire spiritual universe, and that the abnormal importance which sin gives to him will disappear when the sin itself is gone. When the will of God is done by us as it is now done in heaven; when the Redeemer's kingdom is completed, and the Son Himself returns to His primordial subordination to the Father, then, indeed, will the temporary prominence of man be past, and God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all in all.

8. *The Incarnation with respect to other Worlds.*—There is one question that is certain to be pressed some day with respect to the Incarnation, and it may be well that the clergy should be ready, if not to answer, at least to face it when it comes. I do not know that any one can shed much light on the subject, but still I should like to hear whether you have anything to say about it. You have, I think, answered the difficulty about the abnormal importance of man in the universe. The question I have now to name starts from another point of view. It is really an old one, but it comes to-day clothed with a new, and, to some minds, a menacing importance. Let me say at once it is only a speculation, but it is a speculation of continually augmenting interest from a scientific point of view; and should it ever become established must, to some extent, modify our conception of the Incarnation.

Pardon me! That is rather a formidable preface.

You have not yet told me what the question is which deserves so much attention.

Patience! I am coming to it. I grant that you have met the objection that the Bible makes man the centre of interest in the universe. But what about the value of the Incarnation to the other intelligences which have sinned? Did they stand in some peculiar relation to the earth and to man which makes them sharers in the redeeming work?

That seems, at least, possible, if not probable. But I do not see that we have sufficient *data* to form any decisive judgment.

I felt sure you would say that; but I have not yet reached my real point. I dare say you have studied the question of the "plurality of worlds." I am aware that the suns cannot be inhabited by any beings physically like ourselves. I believe also, it is generally held that the planets of our solar system are not, with the exception of Mars, adapted to the support of bodily life as we know it. But, in the boundless extents of space there are, doubtless, not only innumerable suns, but also innumerable planets circling round them. It is not impossible that they are all inhabited by living beings of some kind. But it seems scarcely probable that amongst all these multitudes of orbs there should be none resembling the earth. It is true that, as there are no two men exactly alike, so there may be no two planets precisely similar. Still, if they are like enough to be inhabited by living beings resembling man in physical, intellectual, and moral constitution, that will suffice for the purpose of my question. That there are such worlds I cannot prove. But it seems, from a scientific point of view, exceedingly probable. Perhaps I may not be justified in adducing the evidence

of the spectroscope as to identity of chemical elements, for I am not scientific enough to be able to say whether spectrum analysis applies only to the light of suns, that is, whether the fact that planets shine by reflected light would affect the problem. Be that as it may, if the *suns* resemble in chemical and physical constitution the planet in which we dwell, it is reasonable to conclude that other *planets* have the same resemblance. Besides, is it not held that the last named were once themselves burning bodies, and have reached their present condition by cooling? If so, is it reasonable to hold that only one has thus become a fit dwelling for living beings like ourselves?

I follow your argument with complete assent so far. But clearly you have something more than this in view. Let us, to save time, assume that all the planets are inhabited, and some of them by living beings more or less closely resembling man. What then?

But if they resemble man in other respects, may they not resemble him in having sinned, also, and therefore in having need of a Redeemer? Are there, then, as many Redeemers as there are worlds that have sinned?

That is an impossible supposition. The Eternal Son of God, the Creator of all worlds, is alone the Redeemer of all that have sinned here or elsewhere.

I feel that strongly. But if the Incarnation was necessary to the redemption of this world, are we not constrained to believe either that our Lord Jesus Christ suffices for all worlds, or else that the Eternal Son became incarnate in every planet where there are beings like ourselves? If we adopt the latter supposition, would it not seriously affect our doctrine of the Incarnation?

That it would affect it is certain; how far, I could not

answer without prolonged study, and very likely not even then.

But if we adopt the other supposition, does not the old difficulty—the making this world the centre of the moral universe—come back?

Apparently so, and I confess at once that I am not prepared with an answer that will satisfy all the conditions of the problem you present. Yet, He may have been man in a sense that includes all beings like ourselves, and may have manifested Himself, how I know not, to all His “other folds” throughout the universe. But there are three remarks I wish to make. The first is that in all the teaching of the New Testament this world is *not* the moral centre of the universe: “In My Father’s house there are many mansions,” and “Our Father which art in heaven,” will suffice to show that. The second is—that we may well, enlarging the scope of the words, cry with Abraham, “Shall not the Judge of all the universe do right?” The third is that the object, for which the difficulty is raised by unbelievers, implies an alternative conception of God measurelessly lower than the Christian presentation. The argument is really this: The Bible declares the boundlessness of the love of God for man, man is but an infinitesimal part of the whole creation, therefore the Bible is wrong. The true conception is that the Infinite loves boundlessly where it loves at all. After all, the objection is not of much weight, if we will only think of *God* rather than *man*. In that point of view, instead of the glorification of the earth, it is the glorifying of the Redeemer. If other worlds have sinned as we, this may have been the worst and most wretched of all. And just as Christ’s work on earth, in reaching the extremest sinners of all, included all who had sinned less, so in

coming to the world that had wandered most, He comes also to the worlds that had wandered less. It can scarcely be doubted that, as we in another land and in another age know of Christ's work in Palestine, so may all other worlds know, by ministry of angels, and perhaps of the spirits of just men made perfect, if not by direct vision, Christ's work on earth. If, then, it is known that Christ is the Redeemer of the worst—*i.e.* the earth—it is known that He is the Redeemer of all. This is not, as I have said, to glorify us, but to glorify Him. And, therefore, the supposed scientific difficulty vanishes. The "centre" of the universe is God, the "centre" of redemption is Christ.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE EVOLUTION THEORY.

1. *Introduction.*—What do you say of our Lord's attitude towards the principle of evolution?

I am glad you say "the principle," for that, at least, He clearly recognizes. Take the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of S. Matthew. It might almost be called the gospel of evolution. His recognition of what is known as natural growth and development, *once the seed is sown*, is complete, even to the essence of natural selection. But He recognizes, also, mental selection, the necessary counterpart, in man's case, of the other.

But is not the Darwinian hypothesis of creation by law—the phrase actually used by Mr. Wallace—entirely hostile to Christianity?

There is no such thing as creation by law in the sense of "law creates." In the sense of according to law, we have already seen that Christ recognizes the fact. Why should He not, for as Eternal Son is He not Himself the Creator? Indeed, there are, in the words of Christ, many half-veiled allusions to His own work in the universe. The question of the six days may possibly be settled in the sense of reference to the stages of the vision instead of to those of creation. The important thing to notice is how marvellously true the account is to the spirit of geological science. If from the purely Divine standpoint

the divergences from science be perplexing, it must be admitted that from the merely human standpoint the agreements are much more perplexing.

2. *Consciousness and Evolution.*—What about the origin of mind? Even if life could be explained, surely we here enter on a totally different order of experience?

I think the contents of consciousness of much more importance than its origin. Suppose it to have passed through innumerable stages until it has reached its present point of development, that need not in the slightest degree adversely affect one's faith. For as consciousness ascends, so does the conception of God. He can never be revealed in the future as less than we think Him in the present. But no explanation of the origin of consciousness itself has yet been given. However dependent upon, it is yet wholly distinct from, organic life. Its close connection with the nervous system is still only a connection, for the existence of the nervous system no more explains consciousness, than the existence of consciousness explains the nervous system. Nor do we get over the difficulty by supposing successive and more and more complex modifications through long periods of time. Whether in animals of the highest or of the lowest type, of the most complex or the simplest nervous system, consciousness cannot be identified with the nervous tremors which it interprets. Moreover the intelligence of man is marked by a characteristic which seems to be absent from that of other animals. He not only knows, he also knows that he knows; and he is conscious at once of freedom and of obligation. Suppose the intelligence which he possesses in common with other animals were proved to be but developed life, and life but developed energy, there still remains the consciousness that he is conscious. Suppose

further that even this were, in some at present unimaginable way, shown to be but a specialization of the other, yet we have not abolished the distinction between consciousness and matter or force. Could this be done at all, it could only be by so altering the meaning of the word as to make it include mind; but it would be quite as reasonable so to change the signification of mind as to make it include matter. In either case it would only be the inclusion of two totally distinct, though closely related, sets of phenomena, under one name. If, then, it were true that the universe of matter and the universe of mind originated at the same instant, and have continued in the closest relation ever since, and have been harmoniously developed throughout innumerable ages, yet the distinction between them remains permanent and unchangeable. It is quite true that we do not know what the substance of mind is, considered in itself, any more than we know what the substance of matter is, considered in itself; and if any one choose to affirm that there is an ultimate substance of which these two are but special forms, it seems equally useless either to agree or to dissent. For as it is confessedly out of the sphere of consciousness we can know nothing on the subject.

3. *The General Argument.*—What is your answer broadly to the questionings of science on this point?

It is this. Evolution implies an Evolver, something evolved, and a method of evolving. The something to be evolved must from the first be both matter and mind, or else there must be a fresh something introduced at a later stage, whether that something be a new substance or a new force. Putting aside all speculative considerations, and having regard only to the facts, the theory does not prove the evolution of Christianity from moral

consciousness, nor of moral consciousness from intelligence, nor of intelligence from life, nor of life from matter. We have, to start with, the Divine Evolver, the method of evolution, and matter and force to be evolved. We can trace the Divine evolution of matter and force into the physical universe. But we cannot trace life to matter and force—here, then, there would appear to be something specially added to matter and force to make life. Then follows the evolution of the vegetable world until the animal is reached. Here again we are at fault; we cannot trace intelligence to life. Something, then, has been specially added to life to constitute intelligence. Then we have the evolution of the animal world until we reach man. We cannot trace man even physically altogether to the animal. But the chief distinction is in his mind. Something has to be added to intelligence to make man self-conscious, moral, and free. Then follows the evolution of the human world, until the preparation for the Christ is complete. Here, were the language allowable, the something to be added to man to make Christ is nothing less than God. Still, it seems doubtful wisdom to stake much on origins. It may be that spirit-substance is as universal as matter-substance, “æther” being their nexus. Energy, in all its forms, seems to be as much “spiritual” as “material,” and there is no necessary contradiction of the Catholic Faith in the belief that all created existence has an ætherial “soul” in which spirit and matter meet. Then, life might be developed “energy,” “mind” developed life, and conscience developed mind. All the way through there would be the created trinity of spirit, æther, and matter. In Christ the creature meets the Creator, and humanity enters on consciously Christian evolution. I say “consciously,” for



from the beginning, evolution has been always "Christian" in fact.

4. *Advantages of the Theory.*—I cannot help thinking that you are employing the word evolution in an unusual, though, it may be, in a justifiable sense. But tell me what, from your point of view, are the advantages of the theory?

The advantages appear to me manifold, though the question is one of probable truth rather than advantage. For one example, it enables us to understand in what sense it is true that all things were made for man. Numberless thinkers have long perceived the difficulty of regarding sun, moon, and stars, earth, plant, and animal, as existing only for the comfort and convenience of man. But slowly tracing the evolution of the physical universe, the innumerable varieties of plants, the infinite diversities of animals, gradually ascending to the climax of creation as far as we have any definite knowledge, we find that all things were made for man, in the sense that he is the completion and crown of all. For aught we know, there may indeed be other intelligences in other forms, peopling vast extents in the visible universe, and there may be in the invisible universe innumerable intelligences possibly as much transcending man, as man transcends animal, or animal transcends plant, or plant inorganic matter. But within the range of scientific knowledge up to the present, man is certainly creation's crown.

5. *Second Example.*—Note the way in which the theory of evolution enables us to understand and correct the imperfections of what is called the argument from design. There have been heretofore two great defects in natural theology. In the first place it has so emphasized some adaptations, as of the eye to light, or of the ear to



sound, and the like, as to throw into unnecessary shade the all-important fact that not only some things, but all things are designed. In the second place it has been unable to explain such phenomena as evident incompleteness of faculty or function, or the presence of unused organs or structures. But when we see that God has chosen to proceed on the method of a slowly ascending evolution, we have at once a standard of relative perfection, and such expressions as nature's blunder or feeling her way lose all force and meaning. Suppose, for a moment, that we take our stand in any stage of evolution, and form our ideas without reference either to what has preceded or succeeded that stage; it is manifest that we must make many mistakes in detail, while the scheme, as a whole, cannot be apprehended at all. If any man were to try to understand the condition of England to-day, without regard to her past history, how utterly unintelligible everything would seem! And any attempt to understand the present government of God, without reference to the past, must only result in a chaos of confusion. But if we can trace the Divine method, stage by stage, throughout the evolution of the universe, our difficulties to a large extent vanish.

Evolution opens, however dimly, to our view what may be called the natural history of the universe, the process by which worlds are made, their origin, development, and decay. And thus Shakespeare's majestic vault of heaven, fretted with golden fire, expands before our thoughts into systems upon systems of worlds of incalculable extent and grandeur, yet all proclaiming the story of their past and the prophecy of their future. We may almost behold the universe emerging from the invisible, grandly running its appointed course, and returning to the unseen.

6. *Organic Evolution*.—I am not prepared to assent to that. You seem to be getting far from the Bible account of creation?

Say rather from traditional views of the Bible. Indeed, in that account itself, as really as in science, arise on our astonished vision ascending worlds of living things, plants and animals, of infinitely varied form and function, each generation in its turn giving way to a higher than itself, until man at last is reached. Then, in the darkness of that far-off past, human forms are dimly visible, creeping forward to the day, through ages of stone, and bronze, and iron, until in the early twilight there appear in the east the primæval nations that overflowed the ancient world. Then, as the sun of history slowly climbs the sky, stand out one by one, with ever-growing clearness, the great historic peoples whose descendants we are; whose joys and sorrows, hopes and fears are ours; whose struggle and conflict with hard necessities of time, with reluctant soils, and angry seas and hostile heavens, with frowning steeps, and tangled forests, and deadly vapours, with monsters of the deep, wild beasts of land, and fiercer human foes, whose slowly developing order, and law, and statecraft,—shining with the lighted promise of an infinite social growth,—are the precious inheritance of ourselves and of our children, and of our children's children, while the human race endures. Thus one result of the Divine method of evolution is that the illimitable treasure of the past pours its wealth at our feet.

There is one point as to which the *Guardian* called your view a "grave and wonderful error." Can you really reconcile your notion of a "fall upwards," with the Biblical account?

If that account is to be regarded as a statement intended by the Spirit of God as a literal history of what actually took place, I cannot. If that be the right view, I am, of course, entirely wrong. It is impossible for any one who reads the *Guardian* as constantly as I do, not to have some question of the rightness of his own view when he finds it opposed to so great an authority on subjects of this kind. But the *Guardian* did not give any grounds for its unfavourable opinion, and, so plainly does the view I hold seem to me implied in the Biblical account itself, that I am unable to conjecture what those grounds may have been. Still, I was startled by such an opinion, coming from such a source, and have commenced a re-study of the subject. At present, I think the evolution view goes far to explain, in one aspect, the origin and nature of human evil. It seems the counterpart of St. Paul's doctrine of the conflict of the flesh and the spirit, and to be entirely in harmony with the strongest motives to holiness. If, by any chance, the *Guardian* viewed my words as implying that man had not originally a "spiritual," as well as a "material" nature, I do not wonder that it should have used the severe words I have quoted.

7. *Equilibration: Death?* Thus much as to the past. But what as to the future? How is evolution to end? You know what I mean?

Yes; but from the Christian standpoint there is no end. I believe Christ utterly, let theories come and go as they may. But, like you, I ask the Christless evolutionist, how is all this to end? As Mr. Spencer supposes, in omnipresent death? We are told sometimes to comfort ourselves with the reflection that though we die our children live. But when we look this comfort in the face

it changes into a spectral mockery. Though the race be continually developed for ages to come, it is but to more nearly approach final and absolute extinction. The sun's heat is to yield, the bread of life is to fail, man is to perish. The worlds will finally gather into one orb, that orb will freeze into death, and a lifeless universe will be poised in space. There will be, possibly, a future universe, but it will die in its turn, and the rhythm of life and death will continue for ever. Is this pale spectre of a comfort all you can offer? Is it for this, that countless ages have slowly prepared the way for man? That man himself is patiently evolved into higher and higher forms of noble life? Is it for this, that philosophy has continuously unfolded the principles and modes of being, the foundation on which science has evermore extended her conquests, until it would seem as if, one day, the limits of the universe would be the only horizon of human knowledge? Is it for this, that art has slowly learned to incarnate beauty in forms of constantly increasing loveliness; that music has taught us to regard the universe as one great instrument, over whose keys play the fingers of God; that poetry has listened and learned the deeper secrets of all knowledge, to utter them again in tones of sweet and passionate melody? Is it for this, that men have toiled and dared; women have loved and suffered through all time? Is the great human heart to be made perfect through evolution only to break in speechless agony at the last? Is there to be a resurrection for the universe and none for us? If it must be so, at least do not offer us a mockery. We seek no such consolation, we will find no comfort in illusions, we will calmly face the facts. Though truth itself, as well as love and hope, must die, we will not pass into the grave with a lie upon

our lips. Your future universe is no comfort to us, your rhythm of life and death has no music for the dead. Let the shadow fall, let the darkness come. We die as men.

8. *Christ and Evolution*.—Evolution is *not* evolution without Christ?

No; it needs Him to give it meaning. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," saith the Lord: "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The darkness is gone, the shadow of an infinite despair vanishes before the light of an infinite gladness. Hopeless anguish gives place to unutterable trust and love. New life floods and fills the whole being. The regenerated spirit is clothed with a regenerated body to find a home in the new-born universe. Philosophy, science, art, music, poetry, enter with us upon new developments. *No treasure of the past is lost,*

"Nor cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God has made His pile complete."

Knowledge, indeed, shall vanish away, but only by being swallowed up in a larger knowledge. No sacred ties are broken; the continuity of experience is perfect, the freshness of eternal life is ours; and the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. O Son of God, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE PRESENT-FUTURE LIFE.

1. *Introduction.*—In our last conversation you dealt with the present-future life from the evolution point of view; I should like to have your ideas on the subject from the distinctively Christian standpoint?

Speaking broadly, the sceptic suspects us of unreality as to our professed belief in the other world. He thinks that most of us have, at heart, as little faith as himself in the unseen. I am afraid many of us are, in this, false witnesses for Christ. The first thing to win the sceptic is to live rightly, think truly, and teach wisely, ourselves. All I can do is to call attention to some points in which I think we fail, to say what I have to say methodically. You will observe that the Bible presents no direct argument to convince sceptics either that man has a soul, or that the soul will live after death. Yet the evidence is more powerful than argument; for it is not primarily a series of inductions from facts; it is the facts themselves. The central and supreme fact is the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. When the sun emerges from the concealing clouds, the sudden burst of light is the proclamation of his presence—no need of other demonstration then. So when God in the person of His Son manifested forth His glory, He became indeed the Light of the world, and in that Divine illumination the

hidden things of God and of man stood out at once, as clear and distinct as the lofty outlines of a mountain range when "the rosy-fingered dawn" draws back the curtain of night.

Henceforth the highest class of facts which man can ponder take the foreground in human knowledge. Just as he who cannot find the true God in Christ, can find Him nowhere; so he who cannot find immortality in Christ will turn in vain to the inferences of philosophers, or the arguments of theologians. There can be no certainty at all to those who find it not in Him who spake such words as these, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Accepting, then, the fact that we shall live after death, or, more accurately, that to the inward man, re-created after the image of Christ, there is no death at all, what is revealed concerning the life itself?

The authors of "The Unseen Universe" have given powerful reasons for believing that, from the beginning of our being to our death, there is gradually developing within us what may, after the analogy of S. Paul, be called a "spiritual body," and that in this deathless physical form we pass into the unseen world. It is, however, doubtful whether the words of S. Paul, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body," are to be taken as affirming the contemporary existence of both. Still, if his words do not affirm, they do not deny. In the Bible, we have little clear revelation as to the intermediate state, or as to the local habitation of man in the

interval between death and the second coming of Christ. Two things, however, may, from the words of our Lord and of His apostle, be reasonably inferred, namely, that we shall continue conscious and that we shall be in the presence of Christ. To the dying penitent Jesus exclaimed, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise;" and to the Corinthians S. Paul wrote, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord;" and to the Philippians he wrote, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Surely this may satisfy, if not every natural desire, yet, at least, the deepest longing of every Christian heart.

That, certainly, is the primary element in future as it is in present life. But what do you think as to our abode?

On that point there arise questions difficult if not impossible to answer, except by the merest conjecture. The Christian Scriptures, though in this respect an almost startling contrast to the Old Testament, are yet more or less tinged with Jewish modes of thought. In the light of modern astronomy, revealing systems, and systems, and systems again, where the ancients saw but one, the heavens must of necessity have a wider meaning to us than to them. And it is natural now to ask, Where amongst all the shining orbs whose glory ceaselessly flashes through boundless space, shall be the future home of man? It may be that we shall be endowed with

powers which will render movement from star to star, from constellation to constellation, from system to system, as easy and as rapid as the apparent passage of light from the sun to the earth; but it is natural to believe that there shall be some one place wherein we shall have a local habitation and a name. In the great universe of God, in that called by Jesus "My Father's house," there are "many mansions," probably in free communication with each other. Amongst these, the words of our Lord seem to imply, there is one place specially prepared for us. Where that one place is we cannot certainly know. There are those who think that the new earth which is to be our home is the planet from whose Sinai the words of the law were given, from whose Calvary flowed the life-blood which was to be the saving health of the nations. But, after all, it is not so much the place as the state which engages our deepest interest. Not one of all the brilliant orbs that throw their witchery over the astronomer's heart can be the home of the human soul. For the body, no doubt, a material residence will be provided, fitted to its new and splendid powers: for the soul, God Himself. "From everlasting to everlasting *Thou* art our dwelling place."

2. *Nature of the Life*.—Though the place is left uncertain, though we cannot know either its position in space or its physical appearance, yet may we know the general nature of our life there and of its environment?

Yes, certainly. In the sacred writings there is no break in the principle of continuity. Man in the future is the same man we know here, purified, ennobled, glorified, but still the same. As he who, having passed through long and severe discipline, emerges at last another and yet the same man, so shall we be, hereafter, another and yet the

same humanity that we are on earth. If amongst all the hosts of the learned, the brave, and the good, we should seek for one perfect realization of our ideal of what man ought to be, our thoughts would instantly revert to Him "who was the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." And the proof and pledge that our future life shall be the purified and exalted continuation of the present is that we shall be "like Christ and with Christ." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God," and it is Christ who has made us sons. "We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," and if heirs of His suffering now we shall be heirs of His glory then. "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept," and as the first-fruits show what the harvest is, so does Christ what we are to be. "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one . . . and I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them and I in them." We have here, then, clear and certain evidence that what is noblest and most blessed in us here, nay, that all that essentially constitutes humanity, will continue hereafter. Who has not stood on the bank of a bright, though often troubled, stream on which the heavens threw alike their lights and their shadows? Who has not watched it deepening, gathering force and volume, and, as it became mightier, becoming more and more tranquil in its flow? Who has not seen it darkened for a moment by the shadow of a broken arch under which it passed, swiftly emerging into brighter light beyond? Even such is our life. On its surface play lights and shadows of time; it is often



troubled, but yet, onward flowing, increases in volume, in depth, becomes more and more beautiful and full of peace, until, for an instant, it glides under the shadow of death, to flow on for ever in the calm sweet light of eternity, the same human life still. In all that is most essentially human, Christ makes His servants to be like Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

I am afraid I have hardly thought of it before in that way, but I feel you are right.

Should any doubt still linger in your thought as to the teaching of Christianity on the continuity of life, consider what Christian life now is, and what it must always be, as set forth in the following passages on the subject. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth [a present act] on Him should not perish, but have [as soon as he believes] eternal life." "He that believeth hath passed from death unto life." "This *is* life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ." And in this deep sense, "He that believeth on Me shall never die." So that the distinction is not between a present worldly life and a future unworldly life; between present things that pass away, and future things that shall not pass away; not between a present secular or temporal, and a future spiritual or eternal life. The distinction is a comparison of a present life that combines rightly the true worldly and the true unworldly, with a life that does not; a life which unites the things that pass away and the things that pass not away, as contrasted with a life that is exclusively devoted to either; a life which is, in short, at one and the same time, secular and spiritual, temporal and eternal. And that this is the true distinc-

tion is suggested by yet another fact. There can hardly be a doubt that the present dispensation will be succeeded by another; that by another; that by yet another, and so on for ever. But all these changing dispensations will be only manifestations of that which changes not—the eternal life in God.

Though the truth here stated is not new; though it is that taught over and over again by Christ and His apostles; though whoso wills may find it running throughout the New Testament; though it is the one truth that reconciles religion and science, that harmonizes the facts of sense and the laws of thought, and the conditions of feeling; though it is a truth on which great thinkers and noble doers have commonly, consciously or unconsciously, reasoned and acted; though it is a principle that may be frequently traced in the occasional deeds of heroism of which every man is capable; though in certain forms it is tacitly accepted by most religious people; yet the error which confuses the eternal with the future, and the temporal with the present, is so deep rooted and so widely spread, that it can only be destroyed by long-continued and persistent efforts, on the part of many thinkers, and perhaps through many generations. Still, it will be an advantage if even a few, here and there, can be brought to frankly recognize the fact, that the eternal has not only one temporal which we call the present, but has had in the past, and will have in the future, a countless succession of temporals. But note also eternal life is the life of *God*, and this is the life into which we are taken, which we share, which passes into us “when we have the Son.” If, then, we keep in mind that what is to come is but the growth and development of that which is, we shall have the right line of thought concerning the

continuous life of man, and its more immediate stages in the other world.

3. *Interest in the Present-Future Life.*—Considering how natural the desire is to know something of that life, is it not strange that it seems to engage so little interest?

Perhaps it is because we have been accustomed to think of it as merely *future*. It is true that even children soon learn to believe that only the bodies of those they knew are placed in the grave, and that their friends are yet living in some place or state of happiness vaguely known as heaven. But the energy of life in the young is too full, flowing, and mighty, the expansion of their powers is proceeding too rapidly, and the world is as yet too beautiful, too full of the means and instruments of enjoyment, to allow their thoughts to dwell long on a subject which, by an unfortunately common consent, is regarded as suggestive of sadness and defeat. In early manhood, new wants, new desires, new powers, new passions burst into sudden activity. The glad and proud pursuit of knowledge, the fevered eagerness with which ambition fires the spirit, the keen sense of enjoyment in all pleasures and pursuits of society, in the fencing skill of logic, the flashing light of imagination, the rapid and endless play of fancy, wit, and humour, the genial warmth of friendship, full of ready trust, the strong and bounding physical health, the new-born and almost intoxicating joy arising from the awakened consciousness and free exercise of bodily, mental, and social powers, followed first by the witchery of love, then by the strange blessedness of wedded life, all these so fill up the whole sphere of thought, feeling, and purpose, that foreign and distressing ideas can scarcely find an entrance. Now and then for a moment there is a sudden pause as one of themselves, in the very strength

and joy of his manhood, a companion of all pursuits, a sharer of all their pleasures, passes, in an instant, from their world of light and gladness. A shadow falls upon their spirits, but it soon lifts and goes, leaving scarcely a trace behind.

In riper years, the cares of business or professional duties, the social and national obligations which every thoughtful citizen must sooner or later contract, those deep and solemn responsibilities which every true parent's heart knows so well, and, in many cases, the requirements of personal culture, leave but little time for thoughts beyond the sphere of the present life. True, the pauses are now more frequent, the shadow oftener falls. A father dies, and the heart feels a kind of wrench as though the first strand in the silver cord that binds us to earth had snapped. A mother dies, and a second and stronger one has given way. Still, we could not have expected them to live much longer, and though the tenderness of that early love will never die out of our hearts, yet, in the interest of our children, in the manifold necessities of our work, and in the numberless relations in which we stand to our fellow-men, we soon grow accustomed to our altered state. A sudden illness lays us low and there is for the time a suspense in our life that is almost like death itself. But with returning health, old affections and interests revive, and, though with a deeper undertone of feeling and thought, we are much the same men again. As years roll on, however, we become more and more reflective; we ponder more and more the past, and dwell more and more on the future, even while much of our thought and time, partly from the force of habit, partly from the yet living interest in the world, and partly from the very necessities of our working nature, is given to the present.



Now every sorrow comes with redoubled meaning, vividly recalling griefs which we have already known, and painfully anticipating those which are sure to succeed. A child dies, and our hearts swiftly follow it to its abiding home, whither our own parents are already gathered; friends of our youth and manhood fall by our side; new forms and faces daily rise before us, until at length the world is becoming strange to us, and we feel, in the words of a distinguished statesman, "as if we had more friends in the other world than this;" and even those who are left are growing old and tired of time. At last, death's icy hand is laid upon the bride of our early love, the companion of all our joys and sorrows, the inspirer of our noblest thoughts and purposes, the truest guide in hours of perplexity when duty was hard to read, the comfort, stay, and strength of our hearts when defeat and failure threatened. *Then*—a sudden loneliness falls upon us, and the last tie that binds us to earth is gone. Then "the silver cord is loosed," and ere long, "the golden bowl is broken" also. While we yet live, bright as the universe still is to others, the sun, the light, the moon, the stars, are darkened to us, and in the utter desolation of heart and home we become at once strangers in a strange land. At last, though unhappily very late, our hearts turn with speechless and wistful yearning to the other home and the other life.

But what do you think is the reason why that life does not interest us earlier, and what is the remedy?

The remedy is to think of the other life as present as well as future. It would be well for us all, even from our childhood, to think more of heaven before earth has lost its charm. Tenderly pathetic as the sorrow I have feebly described undoubtedly is, it cannot yet



altogether escape the suspicion of mixed motives. Selfishness of this kind is, indeed, natural, and, so far, not to be charged with wrong, but yet it would be altogether nobler not to postpone the consideration of the present-future life to the period of gray hairs and enfeebled powers. If our youth were tempered more with thoughts of heaven and eternity, our old age would preserve more of the softness and sweetness of youth. Our habits of teaching, both in public and private, are greatly to blame. Death must bring sorrow, but sorrow is our heritage from childhood to old age. The griefs of childhood are as real and as poignant as those of manhood, and our wisest course is not to put our sorrow out of sight, but so to surround it with the circling light and halo of God's encompassing love that all its bitterness, and more than half its pain, shall pass away. There is no denying the fact that heaven is utterly unattractive to most of our boys and young men, and this much less through any fault of their own than through our woe-begotten and most melancholy teaching. Scarcely believing in it ourselves, it is no wonder we cannot win their faith. We talk about it as "rest for the weary," and therefore while they have no sense of weariness, it is not to be marvelled at that they have no thought of heaven. "Rest for the weary" it surely is, and the aged and the worn are glad to think of it so, but that is only one of its many attributes; while it is that, it is measurelessly more than that. Surely our daily repeated phrase, "Our Father in heaven," might teach us better, might suggest that heaven embraces earth now, that the light, the inspiration, the glory of this world of ours is drawn from its radiant presence. Not more surely does the flowing ocean of air encompass this globe, than does heaven encompass the

souls of men. The grace, the joy, the bright helpfulness of childhood, the strength, the power, the high endeavour of manhood, the calm wisdom, the sweet stateliness, the patient watchful love of old age, are equally breathed into us from that omnipresent though invisible world. God, Jesus, holy angels, ministering spirits, will never be nearer to us than they are now, though, paradox as it may seem, we may be nearer them. Heaven has thousands of different aspects; why, in the name of truth and human fitness, should we dwell only upon those that have no attraction until we are old and tired. As the sun rises in the rosy east, gradually putting forth his whole might, shining in peerless majesty at noonday, and then slowly and softly withdraws his radiance until he sinks on the gentle couch of night, symbolizing and illumining every period of human life; so is heaven an inspiration and a joy for our youth, a strength and guidance for our manhood, as well as a comfort and rest for our old age. One can scarcely speak without contempt of many pictures of heaven, so utterly fantastic and unreal are they. Sometimes it is presented as a Lancashire Sunday School anniversary on an enormous scale, with all the meek saints dressed in white, standing with uplifted hands, in the same rigid attitude, and singing the same tune for ever, or as in Martin's pictures, seated, in endless multitude, on wooden benches in mathematical lines. Sometimes heaven is presented as almost a bewildering babel of angelic and human voices; sometimes as a sort of celestial drawing-room, with abundant couches and easy-chairs for the worn-out old saints. Man's nature is too richly endowed, has too many powers and wants to be satisfied with only one employment or enjoyment. Sitting is good for the tired, but who wants to sit for ever? Singing is good, but who

wants to sing for ever? We have taken the free and flowing imagery of the East in the Book of Revelation and stiffened it into the rigid lines of our insular hardness, though even in this we have been not entirely just, for there is much of the very letter of the Apocalypse we pass by altogether. It is true that it is very doubtful whether the Book of Revelation does not refer rather to earth than to heaven. But even so, it is in essence a manifestation of heaven in earth, a manifestation in certain aspects of that present-future life which is essentially the same whatever its local position or environment. Taking, however, in one connected account, all the passages in the New Testament bearing upon the subject, we have a blending of many lights in one, to which I know nothing comparable except the colours of the rainbow.

4. *The Idea of Happiness.*—Is not the question largely one of what constitutes happiness?

It is. The desire of happiness is, perhaps, the most general both in the individual and in the race. Men differ widely in their estimate of what constitutes happiness, and in fact the same man will form widely different views of happiness at different periods of his life, and in the varying circumstances in which he is placed. As men are now they seem, on the whole, satisfied if they can secure some out of many kinds, and, even within this narrow range, the importance attached to objects of desire is constantly changing, for what at one time throws the man into a transport of delight, will at another scarcely win a smile to his face. It would, then, seem extremely difficult to say what happiness is. Perhaps the most simple and natural definition would be, if compressed into a single phrase, the gratification of desire. There is the

advantage in this definition that, while it allows almost innumerable varieties, it yet covers and includes them all. And it will be at once evident that the happiness must vary just as the desires themselves do, and that enjoyment will be pure or impure just as the desires are exalted or debased. But this, though true, is not the whole truth. The desire, though gratified, must not be satisfied, else would the movement of man's whole life be arrested, progress would be impossible, and happiness itself would cease, for a desire once satisfied, ceases to *be* desire, and what is no longer desired, no longer affords pleasure. We must, therefore, amend our definition so as to include the fact of continuous growth. We may now state the definition thus. Happiness is the continuous gratification of desire that is continuously growing. But have we even now completely arrived at a definition? Assuredly not. For we know that there is a law of proportion stamped on the constitution of man's moral nature which inevitably punishes with discontent and unrest, with wasting and poverty of the neglected powers, the gratification of any one class of desires at the expense of the rest.

The principle enounced by our Lord, "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," holds true inwardly as well as outwardly, in a man's own nature, as well as in his relations to the state. The pursuit of a low order of pleasures is inexorably avenged, both by the decay, if not the paralysis, of all the higher powers, and by the lower pleasures themselves ultimately ceasing to be pleasures at all. In order to secure a happiness that will last, we must learn to love that best which best deserves to be loved, and all things else in the proportion and measure of their merit. The deepest want which man can know is the want of God,



and only by first responding to this want can the deepest happiness be enjoyed. And it is a peculiar charm of this blessedness that it does not diminish but increases the pure gratification of all other desires. We may then, until a better can be obtained, rest in the following definition: Happiness is the proportionate and harmonious and continuous gratification of all the desires of man's complex nature in the order and measure of their dignity, depth, and endurance.

Taking in the whole of man's nature, and ascending from the lower to the higher, does Christianity promise real and complete happiness?

I think we shall find that our Father in heaven has provided for us in the present-future life a wealth of happiness that is practically infinite. (a) The Body. In reference to the body. What can be more divinely beautiful than the following statement: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for star differeth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it riseth in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it riseth in glory: it is sown in weakness, it riseth in power: it is sown a natural body, it riseth a spiritual body. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (b) The Intellect. Do we desire the clouds that darken the horizon of our intellect to melt and pass away? Perplexed and baffled here in so many inquiries of the deepest interest, do we long for clear and accurate knowledge? We are answered in words strong, full, and



joyous as the tones of a trumpet, "We know in part and we teach in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child: Now that I am become a man I have done away the things of a child. For now we see as in a mirror obscurely; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then I shall know fully even as also I was fully known." (c) *The Heart*. Would we be assured that we shall not always be subject to the vicissitudes and tribulation of time; and that death itself having come once shall never come again, then are we answered in words, sweet as if an angel spake: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and He shall be God with them, their God. And shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain: for the former things are passed away." (d) *Society*. Society there shall be there, for that is involved in the very imagery of the city, and the gathering together of the multitudes of the redeemed. Recognition of friends there will be there, for that is involved in our Lord's promise to His disciples that they "should be with Him," when He took them to the place prepared for them, and it were absurd to suppose that they should recognize Him and yet not recognize one another; and if there be mutual recognition on the part of those who lived and loved together in the Lord's work in the

first century of the Christian era when they passed into the presence of Christ, there is obviously no reason why in the nineteenth century we should not recognize one another when we, too, "join the general assembly of the first-born." (e) *The Joy of Work*. While the gorgeous imagery in which the glory of our new home is set forth in the Scriptures may well charm the taste of all who believe that "beauty should go beautifully;" in other words, that glorified man may fitly have a glorified home; while there will be there, doubtless, such music as our great composers have perhaps dreamed of, but in vain sought to embody in their works; while there will be there worship so sweet, so tender, so reverent, and so true as to fill with deep and tremulous delight the whole multitude of the redeemed; while we shall indeed there enter upon "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," we may be well assured that the active energies of our nature will find employment too, that in heaven as on earth the strength and joy of men will be found in work. Not in vain did the Greeks of old associate with the conception of the "Maker," all that was sweet in measure and rhythm, all that was lofty in creative song, all that was tender in the spoken melody of human feeling; though few of us have suspected that poetry and work are almost the same word.

Homer, and Æschylus, and Euripides were makers—workmen; and now, as then, to do nobly, to make worthily, is to be a poet; and now, as always, the psalm, the poem, of life, is good work well done. And in the future, as in the present and in the past, rest will consist, not in the cessation of activity, but in the harmonious ordering of all our energies. Man, originally made in the image of God, and bearing traces of that image still, amidst

all his sin, shame, and failure, has ever resembled God in this, that he has continually poured forth himself in what may without irreverence be called almost creative acts, so that the things of him, as of God, which do appear were not made of things which are seen. How boundless is the wealth of human literature! It would appear as if man were under a kind of sacred compulsion to create, to make, to do. Thought, passion, power, springing within the mind, grew and grew, until it seemed as if it must put itself forth in some form, and without cessation, from the beginning until now, it has poured itself forth in strife and conquest, which have again and again changed the aspects of the habitable world; in fearless and enduring labour that promises to make good his divinely-given right to the mastery of the great globe on which he lives; in buildings of such strength, majesty, and grace as furnish still our noblest prophetic imagery of heaven itself; in statuary that is an almost perfect embodiment of the beauty of form; in paintings that seem to have caught the very expression of nature, and even burn with the inward fires of the human soul; in poetry that has glorified almost every subject of human interest, and touched into responsive passion every power of our complex nature; in music whose charm intoxicates with a joy so subtle and yet so full that it cannot shape itself into words or even thoughts; and better still, in deeds of heroic self-sacrifice, of pitying tenderness, of yearning effort for the good of the one human family. All these, widely as they differ in themselves, are yet only multi-form embodiments of the same living energy; war, labour, architecture, statuary, painting, poetry, music, self-sacrificing toil for man, are all alike in this that they represent so much human energy, so much thought, felt, purposed,

done—in a word, so much work. And on the principle of continuity, which is so remarkably recognized in the New Testament, there need not be a doubt that the joy of work will hold a foremost place in the blessedness of heaven. Eternal rest to a nature constituted like man's means eternal activity—activity that never wearies, because it is always in balanced proportion to the nature that puts it forth. Indeed, if we only examine what we mean by repose, we shall discover that what we intend is not the *absence* of employment, but such change in the modes of our activity as may give full play to all the powers of our nature. We admire the glory of the rising sun, we are struck with the fulness of his noonday splendour, we are touched with the quiet of his gentle setting, but who would wish dawn, or noonday, or sunset to continue for ever? And even when our hearts are most suffused with the tranquillity of a summer's evening, when the streams seem to soften the music of their flow, the encircling air moves gently as a mother in the chamber of a sick child, and the hills themselves appear to fall asleep as the darkness creeps slowly up their sides after the retiring light, we must not suppose that there is even a momentary lull in the mighty energies of nature; it is the balance and equipoise of all her powers stilled by the hush of the coming night that makes the charm. And as with nature, so with man; not idleness, but joyful and varied work is rest. (*f*) Completeness. In truth our future life will be all that any purified heart could wish it to be. Clear and accurate knowledge, true and tender feeling, high and exalted purpose, full and varied activity, deep and abiding rest, in the same but yet profounder sense that we understand them here, will be ours hereafter. The essential truths, at least, of all we learn in this world, accompany



us into the other; so that in learning here, we ought to remember that we are learning not for time only, but for eternity also. There will be this great gladness, that the one-sidedness of our knowledge, what S. Paul described as "knowing in part," shall be done away. We know that in looking at a great picture we cannot see it rightly, we cannot, in the deepest sense, see it at all, unless we take the artist's point of view. It was painted *for* that point of view, and cannot rightly be seen from any other. So there is a point of view for which God created the universe, though in this life it is difficult to find, and perhaps we are but rarely willing to find it. Hereafter we shall gaze on the universe of God from the standpoint that God intends, and in that just and true perspective the difficulties that baffle, the doubts that distress us now, will pass away for ever. And this accuracy of knowledge will be accompanied by and spring largely from truth of feeling and rightness of life. What more can we desire? Take from our present world the one almost omnipresent element of sin, with all the pain, and grief, and woe resulting from sin, how like to heaven it would become! Yet all this, and very much more than this, God has provided. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but His Spirit has revealed them;" and the record of that revelation is given to us in the pages of the New Testament. (g) The Supreme Bliss. The chief joy of all I have reserved to the last—our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not too much to say that heaven without Him would not be heaven at all. Whatever we know of the *Father*, we know through Him, and man never knew at once the depth of his own sin and the height to which



he may yet rise until he knew Jesus. We have learnt the defilement of sin. To stand in the pure light of His presence is to know ourselves. "Comparing ourselves with ourselves," we make light of our offences, excuse our faults, and almost lose the consciousness of our guilt. Coming into His light, our own natures are suddenly revealed, and we know what sin means. We cannot respect ourselves, the knowledge of our defilement renders that impossible; all our excuses in which we had wrapped ourselves, as in mist, melt like mist in the sun. An intolerable pain rends our hearts, and unless our sin can be not only forgiven, but also taken away, *rest* there is for us *nevermore*. But He, the good, turns not away from us, the evil. He shows us indeed our defilement to the uttermost, but Divine compassion breathes in every word, and with a patience that never wearies, a love that never fails, He gives Himself to the one purpose of rendering possible the forgiveness of our sin and making actual the cleansing of our hearts. He was for our sakes "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" for our sakes He endured the buffeting of sinners, "He was despised and rejected of men;" and that we might become good, be sharers of His own joy of holiness, even partakers of His Divine nature, "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." Is there in the whole range of Christian literature a more pathetic thought? Is there in the whole range of Christian theology a profounder truth, is there known to the human mind a fact that more moves the heart to joy and floods the eyes with tears than this, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and *with His stripes we are healed*"? We can easily understand now that wherever *He* is must be heaven to us. As one, on whom some great sorrow has fallen, leaves

untasted the fruits and wines of the richest feast, as the widowed wife is all-unconscious of light in the sky or beauty in the earth, so would the joys of heaven be unfelt, so would its glory be unseen, if Jesus were not there. Nay, He creates heaven for us. We worship Him, we cling to Him, we trust Him utterly, there is no Father except in Him, we are not children except in Him, He does not simply create our heaven, *He is* our heaven. And, thank God, this one most holy and most absorbing passion of mingled gratitude, admiration, sympathy, reverence, worship, will have its own joy to the full. Once more, thank God, the relation between the Lord and those men whose dignity, whose glory it is to be His slaves, between the Teacher and His disciples, who with eager eyes watch and wait for every word of His lips, between the one faithful friend and those whom He has taken to His heart with an all-embracing love; thank God, I say, that this relation will be continued in heaven. "And I, John, saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." In the words of one who loved Christ with an intensity of passionate faithfulness never exceeded in the history of man, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

5. *Interpretation in the Present of the Eternal Life.*—To come back now to our every-day experiences. What is their relation to the other life?

I will endeavour to deal with that, but I must ask you to recollect that it *is* a question of life rather than of words. You must have often been struck by the fact

that our Lord seldom speaks of the *power* of God. The references even to His wisdom are for the most part indirect. But upon His character, His righteousness, His love, He dwells almost continually. In very truth there is but little need for any distinctively religious teacher to dwell upon the power and wisdom of God. Every one who feels the awfulness of the universe feels also how impossible it is to put it into words. And he who observes how the immense forces at work are always and everywhere subject to law, and how all these forces, while each obedient to its own law, are collectively impressed with laws continually ascending as they work together in the production of the most complicated results, will have no need to be told that there is everywhere purpose and adaptation, and, therefore, will,—powerful without assignable limit, whose volition is guided by an intelligence without knowable bound. All this is so evident that except for the purpose of deepening an impression already made, it requires no statement. What we do want to know is precisely that which Christ tells us.

Is this great Being as good as He is wise and strong? That He can do what He wills we know, but does He will our happiness? If He does not, then, whatever power or whatever wisdom He may have, He clearly does not desire and cannot have our love. If He does, why is the world so full of trouble? Why in South America do earthquakes, why in Asia do famines, slay tens of thousands of those whom He loves? Why everywhere are the hearts of the innocent broken by the crimes of the guilty? Why are men, all of whom are loved by Him, allowed to confront each other in serried masses to take each others' lives, and encrimson the green earth with brethren's blood? Why is villainy permitted

to plot the ruin of unsuspecting victims until society becomes fevered with suspicion and fear, until every man sees in every other either an uncertain friend or sure enemy? Why do jails fill with criminals, workhouses with paupers, asylums with madmen or idiots? Why, in short, is the universal heart riven with speechless anguish? Tossed in this shoreless sea of misery, is it possible to believe in God's love? The Secularist smilingly or sadly, according to his disposition, puts all these questions on one side, calmly informs us that they cannot be satisfactorily answered, and strongly counsels us to give no thought to God or the future, but address ourselves to the task of making the best of the present life. We cannot, he says, know anything certain about God, or even whether He is, or whether a future life will be; but we know that we *are*, and that it is wisest and best to give ourselves to making the most of the life that now is. Those minds that do not think much, those hearts that have no deep feeling, may perhaps take this advice; but to most men it is impossible. Some, indeed, who both think and feel deeply may adopt it as their creed in sheer despair of any better, though they must often feel how *poor* a creed it is!

6. *The Answer to Questionings.*—What, then, is the response to these deep questionings?

It is just to this deep want of the human heart that Christ speaks. First of all, He lets us see that God does not will that this misery should last beyond the present life, and that our present, full of mighty meanings as it is, is but as a drop to the ocean, in comparison with the whole life that we are to live. He draws men's hearts to Himself by relieving human misery wherever and whenever that misery stretched out its worn hands to Him, and



He tells us, through His servants, of a home not far off, where the Father shall "Himself wipe away all tears from every eye," and where sin and pain shall enter nevermore. He makes us understand that God will reckon against no man the sins which were not committed of his own choice, that even for these sins the penitent may find forgiveness and the taint of the nature itself shall be cleansed away. He does not prove God's love by explaining the mysteries and difficulties that environ our life, but He makes us feel the Father's love in that "He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We feel the Divine pity for our suffering and shame, and while He does not even attempt to clear up the painful mysteries in the moral government of the world, we so see the Father's love in Him that henceforth we can calmly and sweetly trust the purpose we cannot understand in the very midst of our suffering and our sorrow. We clasp Christ and then discover that we have embraced the Father also; or rather we take the outstretched hand of Christ into ours and learn to feel the Father's love as He felt it. And thenceforth, with Him we bravely bear the ills that time has yet to give, until He leads us into the eternal home; where the blessedness of a sinless life is ours for ever. To be "conformed to this world" is to lose our faith, to live for the present only, with little thought of God or the future. To be transfigured by the renewing of our minds is to be transformed into the image of Christ, and to live like Him, to do the Father's will, and dwell in the Father's love now and always.

7. *The Interpretation in Common Life.*—But what I had more particularly in view was the relation of the eternal life to common affairs?



I will try to give some practical hints for guidance. I need hardly say that abstinence from amusements is not necessarily proof of our spirituality. I quite admit that to make the pursuit of pleasure a principal aim, is impossible to any Christian man, and the place which amusements hold in a Christian's life must be a very subordinate one indeed. At the same time, the place, though subordinate, is real, and it is seldom wise of any man to ignore it altogether. It has been too much the custom of one party to visit with wholesale condemnation, condemnation which but rarely carries the conscience with it, the varied pleasures of social life. Thus, theatrical representation is prohibited without the slightest regard to the character of the theatre, or the kind of drama which is acted. Dances of all kinds are censured without the slightest distinction of time, place, or circumstance. Billiards and cards are regarded with abhorrence, whether played for money or not. Outdoor games, such as cricket, football, and lawn tennis, are scarcely admitted to be innocent, while athletic sports and even private practice of gymnastics are regarded as unworthy the dignity of a Christian. Now it must be at once granted that it is quite possible that all these may occupy far too much of our time and attention; but it by no means follows that they are to occupy none at all. In all this, the great law of proportion must be our guide. While that law inexorably requires that all things shall be dear to us in the order of their merit, it finds time and place for the lesser as well as the greater interests of life. We need to remember the continual peril, apart from amusements, as well as in them, of being worldly. While not despising wealth, we need to be constantly on our guard against the exaggerated importance which

is attached to the possession of money. There is an unconscious satire in the phrase we so often hear, "Mr. So-and-So is *worth* fifty or a hundred thousand pounds," or it may be half a million or more, as if it were quite unnecessary to ask whether he was worth anything else. We should better express our meaning and avoid a moral contradiction by simply saying, *he has*, instead of *he is worth*, so much. It is necessary to real Christianity to resist the temptation of regarding business as nothing more than a means of making a livelihood or acquiring riches. Even if this idea is not accompanied, as it too often is, by meanness, trickery, and deceit, it is absolutely false in itself, and debases the whole conception of work. Every one will admit that it would be disgraceful in a clergyman to make the pecuniary reward of his labour the chief motive of his toil; but the day is surely coming (would it were already come!) in which the Christian will see that the same thing is also disgraceful in every species of employment whatever. To do nobly and well whatever is done at all, is to the follower of Christ the first thing; the *reward* which the labour wins only the second. There are other dangers also, one of which is very real and very near; the danger of being too little alone with God. I do not for a moment plead for isolation from society. Social intercourse is alike a necessity and a duty. It would be an infinite folly to accumulate all the lamps of a great city in one place and shroud the rest in gloom. It would be an equal folly to gather into separate communities all the followers of Christ, thus leaving the world to perish in its own darkness. It was our Lord's command neither ostentatiously to exhibit, nor timidly to conceal, our Christian character. "Let your light shine," were His words. It is right that Christian men should,

while always remaining simply and unpretendingly faithful to Christ, mingle freely with their fellows, not only because social intercourse is a necessity, but because, also, the refining and ennobling influence of Christianity will thus spread among men like leaven. At the same time it is quite possible to have too much social intercourse, and I do not hesitate to add that we may have often too much even of Christian society. It is when we are alone with God that we realize our weakness; it is then also that we gain strength. Even our Lord Himself, mighty as He was, felt the need of frequent retirement from the world, and He sought and found opportunity of prayer in the lonely stillness of mountain heights. We, unless like Him we are by poverty compelled to seek solitude in the quiet places of nature, may always retire into the privacy of our own rooms. There, having first let God speak to us in His own word, we may pour out our hearts to Him in silent or spoken supplication. There will our spirits be calmed, our tempers sweetened, and our wills made strong for the battle of life. Thus shall we keep our lives pure and fresh, and so full of the saving health of God that we can pass through the world without contagion or taint.

8. *General Conclusion.*—Will you give me, as a sort of summary, your definition of a Christian, and a short statement of his relation to the world?

To believe in Christ's superhuman power, to accept His teaching concerning the Father and future life, to regard Him in the light in which He regarded Himself are all as necessary to Christianity as the acceptance of the principles of morality which Christ taught. It is not uncharitableness, but only fidelity to truth, to affirm that no man has a right to call himself a Christian who rejects

the principal features of Christianity. The Gospel history makes it clear that Christ's supreme object was not so much to teach the principles, obedience to which constitutes human goodness, as it was while doing this to introduce a force that should apply those principles to the human heart, and develop them in the human life; and also to win back the erring human spirit to its trust in the Father, to pour into the human heart the love of God, to awaken in the human soul a deep sense of its value in God's sight, to enlighten the human mind as to its relation to eternity, and render human nature at once spiritual and immortal. And we find in harmony with this that Christ makes no arbitrary division of morality and religion. It is impossible to separate His teaching concerning man from His teaching concerning God and Himself; and both are viewed in the light of eternity shining in time. We should never dream of calling any man a Platonist who renounced the essential principles of the Platonic philosophy, or an evolutionist who rejected the characteristic features of the evolution philosophy, however much he might value certain details of the one or the other; nor can any man rightly call himself a Christian who does not accept Christianity as taught by Christ Himself, whatever value he may attach to certain isolated parts. Nothing less than sincere faith in Christ, and equally sincere endeavour to obey His will, can constitute any man a Christian.

In following this out let me remind you that there is no faculty of man's manifold nature for which there is not provided a fitting sphere and appropriate exercise, and this is true in reference to ornament as much as use, to beauty as well as strength. The ear conveys to the mind, not only the common sounds of common life, but also the



most delicate harmony of nature and of art. The eye beholds not only the path where the foot may tread, or the place where the hand may work, but also the myriad glories of earth, and sea, and sky, which consume in passionate longing to transfer to his living and glowing canvas the very life of the painter's heart. And so it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." For the animal, there may possibly be more perception of natural beauty in its environment than we commonly suppose; yet, should it be otherwise, as we credit it with no high faculty, so we regard with no thought of censure its simply carnal nature; but for man to be insensible to everything in the universe of God, except that which ministers to his bodily enjoyment, would be, not simply misfortune, but degradation, not simply loss, but ruin; not penury even, but absolute bankruptcy, as far as regards all the nobler wealth of civilization and humanity.

There is, in fact, a duality in man's nature, in which the lower is continually passing into the higher—or rather, perhaps, every desire and power of his nature has more than one side. Thus the desire of bodily strength becomes the passion for influence over men—the hunger for food is translated into the eager passion for knowledge—and the comparatively pitiful longing for sympathy is transformed into the Divine flame of love, in whose light and warmth it becomes "more blessed to give than to receive." Thus, when a man is taken by Christ to Himself, no faculty of his nature is excised, but only purified; it is not the green earth, the glad sky, or the flowing sea, but only "the world" of wanton wickedness against which he is warned. No stern voice forbids to him the laughter of children, the free play of fancy, the vivid



flash of wit, the softer light and graceful flow of humour; but these are kept within their natural and pure channels, undefiled by the baser streams that flow from soiled hearts. No phantom hand is stretched out from the darkness, to forbid the student's eager pursuit of knowledge; he is only asked to mingle with his knowledge reverence. And there is to the Christian an absolutely limitless sphere of ambition, limitless at least in the direction of all good. Not for him the pomp and circumstance of war; if he must fight, it will be *not* for glory but for duty. The applause of crowds may waken in his heart some faint sense of pleasure, for no man has the right to be wholly insensible to the opinion of his fellows, yet he is too nobly and justly proud of his mission and his Master to be satisfied with less than the accomplishment of that mission and the "well done" of that Master. In him there is no foolish affectation of contempt for houses and lands and wealth; he despises not pictures and statuary and verdant lawns and graceful gardens and the thousand charms with which wealth skilfully employed by cultivated taste and sound judgment can surround himself and his home; but there is for him a light, never seen by mortal eye, a music, never heard by mortal ear, filling his soul with a passion so divine, so earnest, so absorbing, and so mighty, that no scenes or joys of earth, no voices of humanity, can woo or win him from the one ambition of his life; for it is no less an ambition than *this*, to rise and rise through all the clouds and darkness of time, shaking off one by one the sins and faults of his spirit, becoming stronger and purer still, as still he rises, until at last he reaches as the essence and elixir of life the simple self-forgetfulness of Christ and of God. An ambition like *this* can be happy only in ministering, not in

being ministered unto. He who cherishes *this* passion *must* rise, not by other men's failures but by their successes; not, therefore, by the benefits which he has received, but by the good he has done. And when the last sentence of all time and the first of all eternity shall reach his ears, it shall be that *which* to receive passes the utmost hope of human bliss, as coming from the lips of Christ, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## CONCLUSION: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

### *a.* COMMENCEMENT OF MY WORK.

1. *Introduction.*—I wish you would tell us what led you to take so absorbing an interest in the subject?

The answer to that question is given in the last chapter of my “Problems of Christianity and Scepticism.” It is too long a story to tell in detail. He who comes from scepticism, not only to Christianity, but to Christ, must have the deepest and most tender interest in those who are still, as he knows only too sadly, dwelling in the region and shadow of death.

Who set you agoing? What society? What bishop? Where were you living at the time?

No society, no bishop. I was not in orders when my work began; and I was not known to any society. I was living in a little seaport town on the north-east coast, used chiefly by sailing vessels carrying coal to London. To the east was the broad and often stormy expanse of the German Ocean. Inland, north, south and west, were collieries and other mines without end. I loved the miners. They were glorious fellows—brave, resolute, hearty, full of good-humour, touched with a shade of fatalism, religious after the manner of sailors, and, like these, careless; not the alcohol-loving sort, but still jolly, and curiously indifferent to pain. Hearing of a pit accident, I went to see one of the sufferers, and

warmly expressed my sympathy. "Bless your heart," he exclaimed, "it's only a broken leg! Why, there's hardly a bone in my body that hasn't been broken one time or another!" Clever fellows, too, many of them. Good mathematicians were not rare, and able theologians might be found in nearly every pit village. Rough, a little boisterous, perhaps, but kind-hearted, and loyal and open as the day. I am told they have gone back a little in character, owing to importations from other parts; but I will not believe it. At all events, in those days I could count "nature's gentlemen" by the score among the miners.

2. *The Sorrow of Unbelief*.—That is rather a digression, is it not? If no one sent you, what moved you to become a lecturer?

From the hour of my return to Christianity, I had never ceased to love sceptics with a passion of pity and yearning. With one exception, it was the ruling power of my life. That exception was and is the intense and burning desire to do what in me is to prevent others from making wreck of their faith. It may be true that there is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds; it may be true that some questioning is necessary to the higher certainties; it may be true that scepticism in one form or another is an essential element in the soul's discipline. Nevertheless, I am not a believer in unbelief; and had I even the heart of a Nero I doubt if I could bring myself to condemn my worst enemy to the three years' agony through which I passed. I do not deny that to some men an experience similar to mine is a moral necessity, and therefore to him who feels he *must*, no dissuading voice should go from me. But let no man play with doubt. It is like playing on the edge of a whirlpool. It may not be always well that

the prayer should be granted, but it is always well that it should be prayed, "Lead us not into temptation." However pure the motive, however strong the necessity, there is a point beyond which doubt becomes an indescribable torture, a maddening anguish, and all but the rarest and noblest few, all in fact except those saintly souls, of whom I need hardly say I was not one, who were trusting God all the time, though they knew it not, come out of that torture, out of that anguish, maimed and scarred for life. No, I am an absolute unbeliever in unbelief. All that can be rightly said for doubt is that it is sometimes the first step towards the truth: but if one have found the truth without the doubt, it is little short of insanity to go away from her and search for her afresh, for the sake of the discipline of doubt. And there is always the risk that, so deserted, she may never show her face again.

You think, then, from your own experience, that doubt is dangerous?

That entirely depends upon what it is one doubts. But in the name of all that is human let parents and teachers beware how they drive their sons and pupils into "infidelity." No boy is in danger so long as he keeps up a sweet, strong trust in God, in Christ; but if you call him "infidel," as I was called, only because he cannot accept your theory of inspiration or of future punishment; if you compel him to let go his hold on God, on Christ, simply because he cannot grasp also your creed, then may the Lord have mercy on his soul, for you have none! If we but rightly valued faith in God, in Christ, the faith which alone is worth anything to the soul, we should gladly welcome the disappearance of beliefs which made way for trust. We should see that, in thousands of cases, to obey Christ is to disobey His



professed followers; that to thousands of men the answer to Christ's cry, "Have faith in *God*," is the breaking away from sectarian dogma; and that therefore it may well happen that the first doubt is not a step away from but a step nearer to the Father.

The defence of sectarian creeds springs from selfish vanity rather than heroic devotion. We are too conceited to allow that our children could possibly detect errors which we had not been acute enough to observe—forgetting that they are able to do this only in virtue of the vantage-ground we had enabled them to take. If we are but girded round with humility, that we may serve one another, we shall be able to keep our sons close to our Saviour, though not close to our creeds. There *is* possible, and even probable, profit in doubting whatever, in its own sphere, does not *command* the assent of reason, conscience, and heart; but there is no profit, there is misery and heart-breaking grief only, in being forced to doubt whether God is good. Let the higher nature repose, with the fearless confidence of love, in the Absolute Good, and, then, any creed may be questioned—questioning does not necessarily mean rejecting—with safety. Let this trust be absent; then—it matters little what becomes of your creed. Would to God I could make all fathers and all priests feel, what I believe to be true in the great majority of cases, what I know to be true in many, that the first step of the sceptic is a step nearer to God! For example, what *is* his revolt against the apparent teaching of the Athanasian Creed, but an effort of his soul to bring his beliefs into harmony with his intuition of eternal right, into agreement with his consciousness of God? And this is the man, whom, while all his thought has yet upon it the bloom of youth, to whom the world is still full of

sweet and gracious promise, we seize by the throat, brand infidel and traitor, and hurl as "rubbish to the void!" Is there not excuse for the bitter cry that the infidels and traitors are *within* rather than *without* the Church? Oh, that men would understand! It is *we* who make "infidelity" strong. It is *we* who furnish the "enemy" with his best weapons, for we arm his reason, his conscience, his heart, against the Cause we profess to defend. Men! men! so long as your sons keep unstained their faith in the living Father, the loving Christ, never doubt that they are Christians, never treat them as strangers to the household of God, whatever difficulties they may have as to the creeds!

3. *The Miners' Call*.—You have told us the motive. What were the circumstances and occasion? How did you begin?

One day my house was invaded by a little army of colliers. I was right glad to see them, but wondered much why there were so many of them, and what they wanted. My astonishment was great when they told me that they came as a deputation from a large number of Christian pitmen, who were being constantly worried and troubled, even while at work, by questions and sarcasms which they had not time or disposition, even if they had the ability and knowledge, to answer. They said that the "infidel" miners were constantly boasting that no minister of religion dare, on a public platform, face even them, to say nothing of their regular lecturers. I replied, "But why do you come to me? What is it you wish?" The answer was they wanted me to lecture, and let their fellow-miners see whether the sceptics would be quite so courageous in the presence of a man competent to answer them. "But," I urged, "how do you know that I am

competent? I have never lectured on the subject in my life." They thought nothing of that; they knew well enough, they said, that I could, if I tried. These acute Northumbrians had guessed from incidental references to unbelief, and perhaps still more from the way in which I presented Christianity, that I was not ignorant of the subject. I pleaded that I had no experience in platform work, and that I might easily do more harm than good. They would take no denial. Again and again they returned to the charge. At last, to get rid of them, and not for an instant expecting what followed, I said: "Try older men first, and, if they all fail you, I will do my best." They went; and I thought I should see them no more. But no one would take up the work, and so they came back to me. I was heartily sorry, for I knew it would involve great labour, and much inward suffering by recalling and vivifying a past full of pain. Besides, I was mortified at having put myself in a position of seeming superiority to older and wiser men, who had thought it better to let the subject alone. But I had promised, and there was no escape. Thus I became, by the call of these Northumbrian miners, a lecturer on Christian evidences.

Had there been "infidel" lectures given there before you began evidential work?

Yes. Several Secularist leaders had visited the town, and produced no small excitement. The hall in which they spoke was crowded, and the attacks on Christianity were so sustained and well-directed as to excite on the part of sceptics great exultation, and on the part of Christian working men much dismay. At the close of each lecture discussion was invited, and very often earnest and happy replies were given on the spot. But

oftener still the Christian advocate had no special gifts for controversy, and was easily covered with ridicule by his skilled opponent. Moreover, the subjects were usually of such a kind as to render their satisfactory treatment in an excited meeting simply impossible. Plain and direct issues, such as thoughtful working men could easily understand, were the exception. Attacks on the Bible, of a sort that required no scholarship to make, but a great deal to answer well, were common. Difficulties of almost every conceivable sort were brought forward in crowds; and behind their presentation was always the assumption that they were peculiar to Christianity, and constituted a sufficient reason for its rejection.

4. *First Effort*.—I suppose you made up your mind soon as to what line you would take. What was it?

It is the unavoidable drawback of the defence of Christianity in detail that it requires almost microscopic examination, and minute as well as accurate knowledge. Nor is this all. Though it requires far less to understand than to explain, yet there are points in Christian defence quite unintelligible without *some* scholarship—without, in fact, much more than is ever possessed by the bulk of the working, or, indeed, of any class. I saw at once the impossibility of giving with advantage any merely defensive lectures. I had, as fixed objects, the preservation of the Christian and the conversion of the sceptic. I perceived clearly that the best method of accomplishing both objects was to exhibit the immeasurably greater difficulties which environ unbelief. And, happily, this could be done in bold and striking outlines, such as any man of average intelligence could, with a little attention, easily take in. Thus the subject of my public addresses became, and has continued to be, not so much Christianity as its



alternatives. In a sense I carried the war into the enemy's camp, yet with the hope of converting the enemy into a friend. I need hardly say that the enemy's captains did not like it. They who seemed to have a monopoly of attack were not a little put out at being compelled to defend, and none the less that they felt that they could not reasonably object to this enforced change of front. I must add that they accepted bravely enough the new conditions, and that they failed was owing to no want of capacity or courage, but only to this—they had an indefensible cause.

Well, let us hear about your first lecture. Were you nervous?

Yes, indeed, to my finger-ends. But I am always at my best when I am most nervous. Mr. Bradlaugh had been lecturing to an audience that crowded in every part the hall in which he spoke. I had no desire to hear his lecture. It has never been my habit to attend so-called infidel meetings, and I knew well that I could do but little good, if any, in the rôle of *defensor fidei*. His subject was "Christianity *versus* Civilization," and I was strongly importuned to give a lecture in reply. I refused, on the double ground that I had not heard the lecture, and that I preferred attack to defence. I consented, however, to lecture on my own lines, and I gave an address (my first) on "Atheism *versus* Civilization." The hall was not a large one, having no more, I think, than six hundred seats, but it was densely packed by a curious and eager audience of miners. I was not absolutely unknown, though very nearly so. But it was a new thing in that neighbourhood for any one to touch the subject, except from the pulpit; and I had announced that I should allow replies at the close of my lecture.



As scarcely any one knew aught of my personal history, two things surprised the audience—the kindness with which I spoke of sceptics themselves, and the knowledge I showed of their difficulties. The surprise would have been considerably less had they but known what I myself had passed through. Yet, I could see that my Christian hearers were a little puzzled; not being certain whether my gentleness was to be taken as a sign of fear. My sceptical friends saw the situation more clearly. They knew that no man who had not sounded the depths of their unbelief could have spoken as I had done. Even they, however, were hardly prepared to recognize in me a friend; it seemed strange that I could so completely sympathize with sceptics while opposing scepticism; and they were inclined to suspect that I was endeavouring to catch them by guile.

I should have liked to have been there. How did the audience behave? Was there much excitement?

Not exactly excitement; but, naturally, the interest of the audience in the discussion about to follow was very great. There had been much boasting as to how the new man was to be “put down,” and the Secularists had gathered in great force to see my execution take place at the hands of their local leaders. But these gentlemen were as much perplexed as the rest. They could not but feel that I was as keenly interested in the welfare of sceptics as in that of believers; and they could not bring themselves to utter one unkindly word. I had made no professions of friendship, but I suppose the love I really felt had made itself evident; and they had given me, without knowing it, their hearts in return. I waited patiently for the expected blows, but they did not come. At last a slight noise was heard, and all eyes were turned

in its direction. A voice made itself audible, speaking to the following effect: "We are all as much delighted as surprised at the way in which Mr. Harrison has spoken, and we only wish that all speakers on his side would imitate his example. If they did, they would prove that they have like him caught something of the freethought spirit." (Laughter from believers, and cheers from sceptics.) "We are not prepared, however, to answer his arguments ourselves" (laughter *and* cheers from believers), "but we challenge him to a public discussion with Mr. C——." (Tumultuous cheering from the Secularists.)

On consideration, I should *not* have liked to have been there; at least, not in your shoes. How did you answer?

For a moment I was lost in admiration of the speaker's skill, his climax being simply perfect. Presently, I became conscious that all eyes were turned on me, and that every one was intensely curious as to how this new development would be regarded by me, for all felt that it would be equally awkward either to accept or decline the challenge. As, however, I had prayed, so to speak, the personal element out of myself, I was not in the least uncomfortable. I replied as follows: "I thank my friend for his appreciative words, but I wish to set him right on one point. If the way in which I have spoken be also a characteristic of freethinking, no one can rejoice in the fact more than I, because it proves plainly to me that you are nearer to Christ than you knew you were. As to your challenge" (with a smile), "will you pardon me if I reply, 'Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly.' On the whole, my friends, I prefer being the spider, and if Mr. C—— will walk into my parlour, I shall be glad to see him. I suppose Mr. C—— is a wandering knight-errant of unbelief, and has given you plenary

authority to challenge in his name whomsoever you will." (Nods and cries of assent.) "And I suppose he has been at it for some time" (assent, but more guardedly, the Secularists becoming suspicious as to what was to follow), "while this is my first attempt. Clever spider! Poor fly! Now, to change the figure, does not this mean, that, having found yourselves wholly unable to give me the threatened thrashing, you want to send for your big brother to do it for you?" (I did not understand till afterwards why the audience laughed with such enjoyment. The fact was, the big brother, as the audience knew, though I did not, was, as compared with myself, physically a small man.) "Now, I confess frankly that I am very much afraid of Mr. C——, and if you will only let me off, I shall be very much obliged to you." (Renewed laughter, the audience refusing to believe that I was serious.) "Really, my friends, I *am* afraid, deeply and terribly afraid, lest by my weakness and want of skill I should do harm to the cause of my Lord and Master. But" (resuming a lighter tone) "you have simply challenged me to discuss, without specifying any subject. Now, you must be aware that there are many subjects ill-adapted to platform debate." (Uneasiness of believers, exultation of Secularists, thinking I was backing out.) "But—I *do not think the topic of to-night one of them*. Atheism appears to me to have so little to say for itself that it does not require an audience of experts to pronounce on its character. Therefore, notwithstanding that I am so unaffectedly afraid as to decline a formal discussion, having yet my spurs to win, while my proposed antagonist is a veteran warrior, I will consent to repeat in condensed form this lecture in Mr. C——'s presence, and, save that I reserve the lecturer's right to the last quarter of an hour

for final reply, will give him as much time as I take myself."

5. *Opinions of the Work.*—Looking back now on the twenty-three years that have passed since your first lecture, how would you answer the questions: Is it wise to do this kind of thing? Does it really do good? Is it not likely that the evil exceeds the good? May you not suggest more doubts than you remove?

The answer can only be in part, because of the extreme difficulty of obtaining the necessary data on which to base a right judgment. A great deal depends on the history of the man, his motives, and his method. In my own case, it was impossible to be silent. Probably enough, I had more love of controversy, more delight in sword-flash and rapier-thrust, than I have ever yet been able to discover by self-examination. But personal triumph was never the motive of any controversy in which I have taken part. As to results, how is it possible to give any exhaustive reply? How is one to learn how much good or evil is done? As to the latter, I have never heard of a case of harm from any lecture of mine, but that is no proof that mischief has never followed. I have received hundreds of testimonies, public and private, to the value of my addresses; but I have delivered many lectures of whose results I know nothing even to-day, and some of whose effects I did not hear till many years had passed, and then, apparently, only by accident. Once, after a lecture, a gentleman came up to me and said, "There are six young men here who would like to be introduced to you." I shook hands, saying a few kindly words to each. The introducer then said: "Six years ago, when you last came to visit us, these young men were all sceptics. Four of them were members of the Secular Society, and two on



the point of joining. In your last visit you won them to Christ, and they have been steadfast Christians during the six years that have passed since then." I could give scores of cases where I have not heard a word as to the effect of my addresses until ten, fifteen, or twenty years afterwards; but in all these cases the effect was uniformly satisfactory. This, of course, makes me hopeful as to the good done by the lectures of whose influence I have not yet heard. But I know only too well that I have given many lectures that, to all appearance, were failures.

Have you encountered much opposition from *Christians*? From sceptics, of course, you have.

Well, I hardly care to speak much about that. There was a good deal to bear during some years after I began. Things are changed now; but I confess there is still a widespread, though diminishing, prejudice against work of this kind. As I have said in my little work on the "Unreasonableness of Unbelief," several reasons may be given to account for this. "There is, to begin with, a feeling that as Christianity is a matter of faith, a reasoned defence is of doubtful value; notwithstanding that Paul claims for Christianity that it is a 'reasonable service,' and calls upon us to 'prove all things and hold fast that which is good;' and that S. Peter emphasizes the importance of being able to give 'a reason for the hope that is in us.' Then there is the painful experience of the wretched apologies that have been sometimes put forth by incompetent advocates, apologies which have been a great deal worse than none. Sometimes it has happened that men who have been prominent in attacking infidelity have ended by becoming infidels themselves, and this, of course, has strengthened the dislike to any controversy with sceptics. Indolence and fear have also had their



share. The uneasy consciousness that they could not give a rational account of their faith, coupled with the disinclination to take the trouble of becoming familiar with the solid grounds on which, after all, it really reposed, made a certain class of believers cry aloud against any meddling with the points in debate.

“A like effect has been produced by the attacks of opponents—attacks often conducted with extraordinary subtlety and skill. The way in which sceptics have succeeded in confusing nearly all the points at issue is really wonderful. They never could have been so successful had it not been for narrowness, bigotry, and ignorance on the side of Christians. For example, here is a man who holds the doctrines of verbal inspiration and of eternal fire, and these views are to him so essential that any attack upon them must be regarded as an attack on Christianity. Of course the sceptic accepts the position with eager and exultant readiness. Nothing suits him better, and nothing can be more foolish on the part of the Christian. Then, in revolt from this, men of a higher type shrink from controversy for fear they should seem to be committed to the defence of doctrines which, in their judgment, are no part of Christianity at all. And thus it comes about that those who have the most and those who have the least faith in reason unite, though influenced by unlike motives, in turning away from controversy. Moreover, there seems to be little belief in the possibility of a high-toned and pure-souled style of controversy. It took years to convince the late Bishop of Manchester that one might be a controversialist and a Christian gentleman at the same time, notwithstanding that he was himself an admirable example of the union. Very lately the Bishop of Wakefield remarked that he had never known ‘a case

of a sceptic being converted by argument alone,' notwithstanding that the sermon in which his remark occurs was itself from first to last a powerful and well-sustained argument on the adaptation of Christianity to the wants of human nature. I do not think that, under all the circumstances, it is much to be wondered at that sceptics honestly believe we are afraid of discussion and that we distrust reason; whereas what we ought to fear is wrangling discussion, what we ought to distrust is not reason but bad reasons."

6. *First Discussion*.—After your first appearance, others would follow fast?

It would take too long to give an account of the lectures and debates which immediately followed. Besides a large number of the "local preachers" of secularism and an innumerable multitude of "members," I met from time to time many leading lecturers of the other side—all of them men of real power—including Mr. Charles Watts, who confronted me on the platform four times, Mr. Foote six, Mr. Bradlaugh eleven. From these gentlemen I learned a great deal, for which I am deeply grateful. I have had recently an illustration of the way in which I was sometimes regarded as a debater in my early days. At the close of one of my lectures, a clergyman rose and said that, twenty-one years ago, he had seen me "badly beaten" in a debate by Mr. Bradlaugh, and yet the effect of that very debate on himself—a doubter at the time—was to lead him "to seek an interview with Mr. Harrison, who had inspired me with confidence that he would deal not only kindly but honestly with my difficulties." He added that Professor Newman, brother of the cardinal, had said to him, "I thank God, I have lived to see a Christian debater discuss in a Christian spirit." He also

remarked that he had in his pocket a letter from Mr. Bradlaugh, in which he said that while he had no thought of returning to Christianity, yet if any one *could* lead him back it would be Mr. Harrison. I have, however, often been "knocked about" a good deal in discussions.

But what about your first encounter? Was it a success?

Well, it was a decided success, but not of a high order. But the story is worth telling, I think, for what it illustrates. If there must be discussion, it is essential to be well prepared for it, not only as to spirit and temper, capacity and knowledge, and power and readiness of speech, but also as to what may be called the mechanical business of debate. In the interval between giving the lecture which began my career as a missionary to sceptics and my repeating the lecture in the presence of a recognized leader of the secularists, I had somewhat seriously overtaxed my strength, with the result that, when the important day arrived, it found me in bed. I stayed there till within half an hour of the time, and then rose pale and weak and scarcely able to walk the few score yards which separated my house from the hall. When I stood up many of the audience mistook for fear the pallor which illness had produced, an impression deepened by the feebleness of voice with which I spoke. I got through my half-hour somehow, and was glad to sit down. There was very little manifestation of feeling. The Secularists, from real sympathy, for they, at least, were sure that my white face was not a sign of fear but of pain; the Christians, because I had not closed with anything to justify cheers.

7. *A Personal Issue*.—How did your antagonist meet you? What were his tactics?

On rising, he was warmly received by his friends, who were not, however, quite as confident as himself that I was about to be extinguished.

But what did your opponent say?

Greatly to my surprise, he made no reply at all to my lecture, except on a single point. I suppose he imagined, not without some reason, that if he could make this point good he would discredit my fitness as a debater from the beginning of my career. All turned upon whether I had correctly quoted Mr. Bradlaugh, or had deliberately attributed to that gentleman words he had never uttered. Not liking to be bothered by books while actually speaking, I gave all quotations from memory, offering to furnish the references to "chapter and verse," if my opponent required it. The books necessary for this purpose were lying on the table, and I noticed that Mr. C—— carefully examined them. The book from which I had quoted Mr. Bradlaugh's words *was not among them*, and my antagonist at once saw how great an advantage it would be to challenge me for an authority I could not produce. But in the exultation of the moment, he went far beyond the limits of good taste. He charged me with having misquoted and misrepresented Mr. Bradlaugh. I asked him whether he meant that I had done so accidentally or of set purpose. He replied that he charged me with deliberate misrepresentation. The chairman, at my request, wrote down his words. Then, turning again to the audience, I said that if Mr. C—— made good his charge, my career ought to end where it had begun, a remark which was very generally cheered; but the Secularists hardly liked it when I added that if he failed to make good his charge, his career ought to end there and then.

I repeated the quotation and then asked Mr. C——



whether those were the words which, according to him, I had falsely attributed to Mr. Bradlaugh. He replied in the affirmative, whereupon I requested the chairman to write them down, and having done so to read them aloud, so that Mr. C—— and the audience might judge for themselves whether they had been correctly written. This point being settled, I remarked that it was a great pain to me that the intensest interest of the discussion should turn upon a personal question; but that I felt bound to demand from Mr. C—— an ample and immediate apology, without which I could not allow the discussion to proceed. *I then took the book out of my pocket, read the quotation word for word as the chairman had written it, and handed the book to Mr. C——.* His face grew whiter than mine, but after a while he rallied, and tried to go on with something else. He was met with a storm of cries, in which the Secularists joined, "Apologize! apologize!" He tried hard to escape the dire necessity, and I felt really sorry for him. But the audience had now taken the matter into its own hands, and each attempt to speak was met with the cry, "Do you apologize?" At last he had to say, "I do." But, having done this, he might as well have retired; for no one, except myself, took the slightest notice of what he said.

8. *The Result.*—You were not quite satisfied with the discussion. Why?

Because, with one exception, nothing of any real advantage was accomplished. The interest of the audience was too much drawn to the personal question to give much attention to anything else. My immediate object was, however, gained. Sceptical attacks became much more modest, and my friends among the miners had a period of peace.



## b. SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES.

1. *Introduction.*—How did you like the work? Were you fond of lecturing and debating?

On the contrary, it was very painful to me; how painful no one can imagine. I had no ambition in that direction. My strong desire was to write, not speak. I knew perfectly well that I had not the orator's temperament, his language, his imagination, his command of passion, his vibrating voice. Until practice cured me, I was a hesitating, blundering, and often foolish speaker on the platform. Even when I had acquired some mastery over myself my nights were horrible. I could not sleep for the misery of remembering how badly I had "put things." For years I hardly ever knew what it was to have, when on evidential work, one good night's rest. I was very strong or I must have died, for the strain was tremendous. It was not until I had learned to trust God to make use of my honest blunders that I was able to sleep well at night. I suppose I was, in a sense, fond of straightforward fighting, but I should have infinitely preferred the pen to the tongue as the weapon. I discovered, however, there were hundreds of men who could write far better than I, but only few who were willing to go through the long pain of preparation for the platform. I ought to modify that, for I was not willing. I did not at all foresee the suffering before me, but I could not turn back. Yet I must tell those who think me something of a war horse that sniffs the battle from afar, that, from the moment I knew what my work meant, for many a long year I never went on the platform without fear and trembling, and that I have literally prayed my way to such success as I have had.

2. *Personal Questions.*—Have you adhered to your early style?

As to the way of putting arguments I have changed in one respect; I have become more scientific. I had a great fondness for logic. To take a precise proposition and prove it with formal completeness was, at one time, a great pleasure. But I soon found that truth could not always be presented in that way without mutilation. It too much resembles the stiff primness of the old French gardens. I had another passion which modified the first. I revelled in the philosophy of science. Unfortunately I am no mathematician, and have lost much from that defect; but even so there was still something to be learned from contact with thinkers of that type. It was puzzling, after coming from the "infinite" of metaphysics, to be told that in mathematics there might be any number of infinites, until it became clear that the word was not used in the same sense. There was a like difficulty about the statement that parallel straight lines, if continued to infinity, must meet. One could only helplessly urge that, in that case, they would cease to be parallel. Then what could one, so ignorant of the subject, make of the statement that "in infinity" a curve became a straight line? It was no use to say, "then it ceases to be a curve." That only excited a smile. I suspect still that it is a question of accurate definition. But two things comforted me. The mathematicians one met did not usually themselves regard their science as affording ground for unbelief in God; and they could not do much more than make a start, if even that, without taking for granted principles that amply justified the evidential argument.

In what sense did you become more scientific?

In two senses. The first was thoroughly studying the

method of science. Hamilton, Mill, Jevons, and Spencer were splendid guides. The next step was becoming familiar not only with books on the philosophy of science, but also with elementary experiments in physics and chemistry. Very often one found reference to scientific speculation unavoidable in lectures, but very often, also, opponents challenged me on alleged scientific grounds, and did this in terms that seemed to imply familiarity with work in the laboratory. Though sure of the principles, it was impossible to answer in like terms. To get rid of this difficulty once for all, the best method was to learn enough of experimenting to be quite sure of my ground. Living twenty miles from the nearest great town, there was only one thing to be done; build and furnish a little laboratory for myself. Under the skilful guidance of a scientific friend this was done, and under the same guidance enough was learned to enable me to use as illustrations experiments actually performed. From that day to this my lectures have never been challenged on the ground of inaccuracy in matters scientific.

Well, that is rather hard on you, after having taken such pains, and being at so much cost to qualify yourself.

It was well worth the trouble on its own account, though it was not accomplished without a severe strain on my physical strength, as my ordinary work went on all the same.

3. *Difficulties of the Work.*—I suppose, like most specialists, you have met with some difficulties?

My personal discouragements are hardly worth talking about. From the first, the Christian Evidence Society took much interest in my work, and of late my course has been rendered a comparatively easy one by the Church Parochial Mission Society, and I have met with nothing

but the warmest kindness from the clergy. But on public grounds it is much to be desired that the Church should do the work herself, and not leave it to societies. If there are to be specialists at all, they ought not to be in charge of parishes from the time they undertake the special work. Even if their parishes did not suffer from their frequent absences (a nearly impossible supposition), they, and, therefore, their work, must suffer from their taking the care of their parishes with them. It is best to select evidential missionaries from those who have had some parochial experience. Yet, if men gave up their livings to undertake this special work, what is to become of them when they can, though still able for much else, do sufficiently well the special work no longer? As they have worked in all dioceses, they will have a claim on none in particular, and the Church, except in the diocesan sense, has nothing to offer them. Even if she had, there is no certainty that the offer would be made. An arch-deacon wrote me lately that I ought to look out for likely young men whom I might help to train for the work. The men could be found easily enough if there were any certain or even strongly probable prospect before them. Work in a parish faithfully done, gives an acknowledged claim on patrons; work of this kind gives an acknowledged claim on nobody. It is not altogether, nor, perhaps, chiefly, a question of finance. There might be found, I think, a sufficient number of men who had adequate private means. But one naturally looks forward to some sort of recognized position, won by long-continued and honest work.

The case might possibly be met by the appointment of diocesan evidential missionaries. These would have a recognized claim?

Yes, that would answer, I think, especially if, on proper conditions, they were allowed occasionally to exchange duties for a time with the missionaries of other dioceses. But, useful as they would be, one must look elsewhere as one's chief hope.

I do not quite understand. You are not going to abandon your plea for specialists, are you?

No. On the contrary, there is plenty of work for hundreds of them to do. Nevertheless, one's great hope is in the parochial clergy themselves. Unfortunately, numbers of them are overworked to an extent that renders any new departure out of the question, and this, usually, in towns where special evidential efforts are most needed. Still it is upon them, their insight, their knowledge, and their character, that evidential influence must most depend.

Do you think that their influence in that respect is increasing?

Most assuredly. As a rule, they *understand* scepticism better. They are beginning to see that it is not a question of this or that particular objection; it is a question of standpoint; intellectually, of whether or no the mechanical theory of the universe is exclusively true; morally, of whether or no Christianity is reconcilable with experience. They are learning to understand and feel what this involves, though they may not see their way at once to grapple with the sceptic who answers the first question with an emphatic "Yes," and the second with an emphatic "No."

But how can you be sure that the missionary himself rightly appreciates this question which seems to be the root of every kind of unbelief?

If he does not, he has yet to learn his business, and



learn it, of course, he must. But if qualified to be an evidential missionary at all, he will not fail here. And if he does little else, he will do much in making the fundamental question clear to the clergy whose parishes he visits.

4. *Discussion of Details.*—At all events, I thank you for having made it clear to me. But do you not think it important to meet such questions as Professor Huxley, for example, raises as to discrepancies in the Gospels?

It is, of course, desirable to explain all difficulties if we can. I suppose you allude to such points as that in one Gospel there are mentioned two demoniacs or two blind men, where in another there is but one; to the differences in the accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection, and the like. But what I wish to emphasize is the importance of enabling ordinary men to see that, whether these difficulties can be explained or not, they afford no ground for denying the general truth of the Gospel story, and less than none for rejecting the Christ of that story. It is not impossible, believe me, to make the average working man see that there is no scientific theory that will account for Christ without accepting the Gospels as profoundly true. He *can* perceive that, if the story be not true, its existence is a far more difficult thing to explain than are the things therein recorded on the supposition that it is true. He *can* realize the inadequacy of every anti-Christian theory to account for Christ. But so long as he not only regards the universe as a machine, but also looks on himself as an automaton, he will naturally pay no attention to any evidence you can present, except such as directly tends to modify his view of his own nature. If you can succeed in that, then you will very likely succeed also in convincing him that the

final settlement of such questions as those raised above may be left to scholars, inasmuch as, however they are settled, they do not affect the fundamental claims of Christ.

You have, in common with others, said (in your "Problems"), that whether or not the miracles accredited Christ, Christ accredited the miracles. I think I understand what you mean, but I should be glad to hear the explanation from your own lips.

I am not sure that "miracle" is the best word to employ, except of Christ Himself. He is the one transcendent *miracle*, and all His deeds, while perfectly natural to *Him*, were simply signs of what He was. The whole object of His mighty works was to win and justify faith *in Himself*; I mean as compared with faith in His teaching detached from Himself. His actions were in absolute keeping with His character. Each perfectly fitted into the other. "Signs" were evidently distasteful to Him in every way but one. His mighty deeds were the condescensions of infinite strength to human weakness. They were necessary not, perhaps, even then, to the highest spiritual sensibility, but to the every-day condition of ordinary men. The contra-natural of human sin was met by the supernatural of Divine pity.

5. *Treatment of Opponents.*—I notice that you make little use of sarcasm. Is it not sometimes allowable?

Perhaps. But it is a very unsafe weapon. It rarely does good, and always inflicts pain. But inflicting pain that does no good is cruelty. The temptation to use it, however, is sometimes very great, and, if one is not watchful unto prayer, may be irresistible. But sometimes one is credited with a sarcasm that was not intended. I remember one occasion which will serve as an illustration.

I had been lecturing on "Miracles, Prayer, and Natural Law." The lecture was a bit of dry reasoning, lighted up by half-humorous description of simple experiments which I had performed. I attacked no one, unless my remarks on Dr. Tyndall's "prayer-test" could be so called. At its close Mrs. X. stood up and said, "I do not agree with the theological conclusions of the lecture, but, in common with this vast audience, I am deeply grateful to the lecturer for the large amount of scientific information he has packed into his address." (It was not much, but doubtless seemed large to those who had little.) "I have risen, however, for the purpose of challenging the lecturer to a public debate!" (Loud cheers from the Secularists.)

Mr. H. "I am grateful to Mrs. X. for her appreciation of my 'science,' but should have been more grateful still had she appreciated the argument, for whose sake the 'science' was introduced. I must, however, decline the challenge to a public debate with Mrs. X." (Hisses from the Secularists.)

Mrs. X. "I wish to know the lecturer's reason. You have debated with Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Watts; you cannot, therefore, object to the principle of public discussion. Are you, that have debated with men, so wanting in gallantry as to refuse the challenge of a woman?"

Mr. H. "It is just because I am not wanting in gallantry that I refuse."

Mrs. X. (who was becoming excited). "That excuse will not serve. I must have a straightforward answer."

Mr. H. "Surely my answer is straightforward enough. I do not like to discuss with a woman. Let women discuss with women, and men with men."

Mrs. X. (now very angry). "I do not want to be treated as a woman. Treat me as a man! Treat me as a man!"

Mr. H. "I am deeply sorry that Mrs. X. should make this a personal matter. But it is impossible for any gentleman to treat her otherwise than as a woman."

Mrs. X. (in a shrill scream and shaking her fist in my face). "You are no gentleman! You are no gentleman! I insist on knowing your reason! I *will* have it!"

Mr. H. "Believe me, I have no other reason than the one I have given." (Hisses from the Secularists and cries of "That's no reason!") "Let me explain." (The Secularists were at once silent.) "I have never been a sporting man, and many of you can use sporting phraseology better than I. There is, I think, a practice called 'handicapping.'" (Laughter from the entire audience, every one having instantly caught the idea.) "Now, in a discussion with a feminine opponent, I should be far too heavily handicapped."

Mrs. X. (furiously). "Treat me as a man, I tell you 'Treat me as a man!'"

Mr. H. "The simple truth is, I cannot forget that Mrs. X. is a woman, *however ready she may be to forget that fact herself.*"

I emphasize the objectionable words in my reply. It is astonishing to myself that I did not at the moment see how objectionable they were. But, honestly, I had no idea of their force until I saw the effect they produced. (It is only right to say here, to prevent a false impression on the part of some, that my opponent was *not* the distinguished successor of Madame Blavatsky. Mrs. Besant is incapable of acting in the way described.)

You would, however, allow the use of humour?

I have not often had to regret my use of humour. I knew from the first that it was, like sarcasm, a dangerous weapon, though in a different way. There is no danger



of its inflicting pain if it be not only humour, but also good humour. But if a man were at all unscrupulous, he might easily employ it to turn the edge of an inconvenient question. I may mention an occasion as to which I am not quite sure if I was right. I was pressed about the silence of Josephus. I pointed out how dangerous it was to argue from silence, and finding my opponent impervious to serious reasoning, determined to try an illustration. I said, "You remind me of an Irishman who was charged with some offence, I forget what. He listened with perfect coolness to the evidence of ten witnesses, and then addressed the judge as follows, 'My lord, ten witnesses have sworn they saw me do it. If your lordship will give me the time, I'll produce ten thousand witnesses that did not see me do it!'" The opposition collapsed; but on reflection afterwards, I was not so sure of my illustration as I was at the moment. The Irishman was right enough, had his ten thousand consisted really of witnesses, that is of men who saw the act, but did not see *him* do it. The only thing that gives importance to the silence of Josephus is the supposition that he was in a position to know, and that the illustration does not touch. At the same time the silence of one man, as to whom we do not know whether he had heard or had not heard, but who, at all events was not a "witness," of the events, and the reasons for whose silence we do not know, is of no avail against the evidence of men who *were* witnesses.

Often, however, it is almost the only weapon that is of any use. There are some questions which cannot be treated seriously without giving them an importance they do not deserve. At the close of one of my lectures, a Unitarian minister asked, "Do you *believe* in the devil?"



I answered, "No, I do not, I *believe in* God; but I believe there is a devil." He said, "You are splitting hairs." I replied, "That is not a very kind or a very fitting charge, seeing how few hairs I have to split" (I have the fortune to be rather bald). "But I should think you are the only man in the audience who does not see the distinction between believing and "believing in."

I have said the use of humour is occasionally dangerous. Here is an illustration of another kind. In the early days of my lecturing, it was no unusual thing for me to travel all day to reach the place of lecture and discussion and then travel all night to reach home and my ordinary work as soon as possible. On one of these occasions, I had asked the guard to take my ticket and lock me up in the carriage where I settled myself, if possible, to sleep. Presently, however, two gentlemen, one of whom was provided with a railway key, entered the carriage, but courteously remarked that I need not disturb myself in the least. I thanked them, and turned round. "Well," said one of these gentlemen to the other, "what did you think of the lecture?" "Oh," was the reply, "I thought it very good." "So did I," rejoined his companion, "and particularly one argument which I have never met in that form before." Here I almost involuntarily showed some sign of being awake, whereupon the following conversation ensued. "May I ask, sir, if you were at the lecture to-night?" "I was." "How did you like it?" "Pretty well. Might have been better." "Come, now, didn't you think the argument I was so struck with particularly good?" "I don't know about that. I think I could give as good myself." Thereupon the other gentleman started angrily to his feet, exclaiming, "Why, sir, you must be an infidel!" I laughed so heartily at the

charge that my wraps fell off, and revealed—the lecturer!

Does it not often happen that opponents take no notice of your address, and go off on some pet subject of their own?

Yes. It is very difficult to get them to keep to the subject. Mr. Bradlaugh, for example, would insist on going wherever he pleased. Once he accused me of “preaching.” “Well,” I answered, “that is not a very serious charge. Preaching comes naturally to me, for it is one of the duties of my profession. But at all events I stick to the text, which no one will accuse my opponent of doing!” A lady disputant said, “Mr. Harrison complains that I do not follow him; well, this time I *will* follow him,” and incontinently went off to something else. I replied, “I will not be so rude as to contradict a lady, but I must say that if she has followed me, it has been at so great a distance as to never come in sight!”

6. *Examples of Seeming Humour.*—I suppose that sometimes a perfectly serious argument, when its issue is not seen till the last moment, comes with all the surprise which is an element in humour?

I can give you two examples. One of the lecturers of the Secular Society appeared at the end of an address and urged as a powerful argument against Christianity certain statistics as to the “religions” of criminals in gaol. There were Roman Catholics, “Episcopalians,” Congregationalists, Methodists, etc., but no “infidels!” I asked.

“How many *Christians* were there?”

He answered, giving the total of the “members” of different bodies.

“And you think these were Christians?”

“Of course.”

"And it was Christianity that sent them to gaol?"

He hesitated.

"Do you suppose they were all justly condemned?"

"I have no reason to suppose otherwise."

"In that case, they were all unfaithful to Christ; it is a case of mistaken identity; so far from your finding no infidels, you found infidels only in your gaol."

I may add, for the sake of fairness, that my opponent was not the only one who thought my answer not rigorously just. One of the best of our colonial bishops, who happened to be present, wrote to me that, as a churchman, he could not endorse my answer. These men, he thought, however deeply sinning, were not outside the pale of grace, and, as baptized members, might still be regarded as Christians. I answered that, however true that might be, it applied equally to our opponents themselves, for they, too, were not outside the pale of grace, and were almost to a man "baptized" members. I added that antagonism to Christ manifested in conduct was as much infidelity as antagonism in creed, even if the former did not include the latter.

In the second instance, my opponent had been questioning me on the "Socratic" method. As far as I can remember, our dialogue ran thus:—

"How can anything exist outside of the infinite?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"But you say God is infinite?"

"Yes."

"Then there is no room for the universe?"

"That is a statement, not a question."

"But you have told us that God is infinite, and you admit that nothing can exist outside of the infinite" (triumphantly). "*Where*, then, does the universe exist?"

"Inside, of course. In Him we live and move and have our being."

(The answer, though obvious enough, had, in the circumstances, all the effect of a surprise. I am not sure of the propriety of the words "inside" and "outside." But I think it was a legitimate answer to the question.)

"Does God know?"

"In the sense of consciousness, yes."

"Has He memory?"

"I doubt if memory is the best word to use."

"Why?"

"Because memory in the merely human sense seems to imply imperfection and growth of knowledge."

"What word or words would you, then, employ?"

"Eternal consciousness."

(Here the answer was to most of the audience a genuine surprise, not themselves seeing until the words were uttered what answer it was possible to give briefly.)

"Now, if God be infinite I will prove that He cannot know anything."

"According to the rules of the debate you are, at present, simply to ask questions."

"Well, I will ask questions. The thing perceived must be external to the being perceiving, but as there is nothing external to God, does it not follow that God can perceive nothing?"

"I do not admit the doctrine of knowledge on which your question is based, and, therefore, cannot admit that your argument is worth anything."

At last it came my turn to ask questions.

"Do you believe you exist?"

"No, I do not."

The audience laughed, not seeing what was meant.

"Do you know you exist?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By self-consciousness."

"You have said that that which is perceived must be external to that which perceives. Does it not follow that in order to perceive yourself, you must get outside of yourself?"

The audience burst into "inextinguishable" laughter, seeing suddenly and clearly the point.

7. *Casual Conversations*.—Very often one does not know beforehand to what class a sceptic belongs. I wish you would give an example of what I may call your casual method?

I happen to have here a report of a conversation of that kind. The clergyman who accompanied me (as a rule it is better that no "third party" should be present), could not tell me more than that his friend was supposed to be a sceptic. In such a case one has to feel his way very cautiously. Here, however, is the conversation.

Mr. A. "I have brought Mr. H. to see you. I thought you would like a chat with him."

Mr. L. "I am glad to see you both. I have often heard of Mr. H."

Mr. H. "And I am glad to come. I hope we may learn something from each other."

Mr. L. "Ah! you are a practised debater."

Mr. H. "Is that a disqualification? If you wanted a gardener" (pointing to the garden) "would you choose one who understood his business, or one who did not?"

Mr. L. (smiling). "That is well put. But still I feel I am not competent to argue with you."

Mr. H. "But what does that matter? From what Mr.



A. tells me you are a man who thinks and reads. I am sure I can learn from you, and, if I can, I will give you something in return. Besides, I do not care to win a victory for myself."

Mr. L. "Believe me, I did not mean that. I had no thought of suggesting that you came to see me from any such motive."

Mr. H. "Spoken like a gentleman. It does not matter whether I am beaten if the truth is not. The practical thing is for every man to live the truth he knows."

Mr. L. "What is truth?"

Mr. H. (smiling). "The everlasting question! How can I tell you? Every one knows truth to some extent, but who can define it?"

Mr. L. "I rather think men believe as they must. One can't help his beliefs, or, in fact, what he is."

Mr. H. "Do you really mean that? Don't misunderstand me. Remember I know nothing of your intellectual whereabouts, and I am only desirous to guard against mistakes. Would you say, for example, that you were compelled to utter exactly the sentences you have just spoken?"

Mr. L. (looking at H. keenly and half smiling). "And if I did?"

Mr. H. (smiling in turn). "I shall wait until you do. Will you say you have no self-directing power at all?"

Mr. L. "Well, no. I am not quite prepared to say that."

Mr. H. "Then, however little self-directing power a man has (though whether it is little or not a man cannot tell till he tries), for that little he is responsible."

Mr. L. (again looking keenly and curiously into H.'s

face). "You use some terms that are new to me. Why do you not speak of free-will?"

Mr. H. "To avoid needless controversy. I do not say whether will is a sort of 'energy' or not. But I want to emphasize the fact admitted that man is able, to some extent, to alter the direction of force; in other words, to use the powers he has in one way rather than another. What I want to show you is that it is right to direct your own powers towards Christ."

(Here, Mr. L. regarded H. with the air of a man to whom an old statement had been presented in a new light—not new in itself but new to him.)

Mr. L. (after a pause). The fact is, I rather agree with Schopenhauer. I am a pessimist."

Mr. H. "Was Schopenhauer always a pessimist? Are you always a pessimist?"

Mr. A. "Not he! The fact is, he is only just recovering from a serious illness, overshadowed by the loss of a fine boy of fourteen."

Mr. H. "Forgive me! I did not know. That is a sacred sorrow."

Mr. L. (after a successful effort to recover the self-command upset by the allusion to his lost son). "To return to Schopenhauer, I do not suppose there were no exceptions."

Mr. H. "Intervals of shall I say 'health,' not health of body only."

Mr. L. (answering what he supposed to be my thought). "He lived, I believe, to over eighty."

Mr. H. "Oh, I dare say. Bilious people often reach old age, and I do not urge it against him, any more than against Hartmann, that he was in no hurry to quit this life. But do you not think if a man knows himself to be

a pessimist that very fact ought to put him on his guard?"

Mr. L. (surprised). "Against what?"

Mr. H. "Against himself! If a man has any tendency of a pronounced type, he is likely, if he is not on his guard, to consider only the facts that seem to agree therewith, and leave the rest out of account."

Mr. L. "The same thing might be urged on the other side." (He evidently meant, with respect to optimism.)

Mr. H. "Certainly, that is quite just. I want you to take all the facts into account, but the main thing is to have the will *set* in the right direction."

Mr. L. "Is there anything higher than the will?"

Mr. H. "I'm not quite sure that I understand your question; there is, of course, what is called the conscience or the mind's recognition of right and wrong."

Mr. L. "Oh, there you are. What do you think of the Thug's conscience?"

Mr. H. "I think it needs enlightening."

Mr. L. "But then you give up your argument. What is the use of a conscience that needs enlightening?"

Mr. H. "I'm not sure that you seriously mean that. If your argument proves anything, it is just as fatal against reason as against conscience. Both may make mistakes; what is considered reasonable in one part of the world is sometimes not considered reasonable in other parts."

Mr. L. "The enlightened reason makes no mistakes."

Mr. H. "Perhaps not, in so far as it is enlightened, but exactly the same thing may be said of the conscience."

Mr. L. "Ah, I hadn't thought of it in that way! But it must be admitted there is great intellectual difficulty in determining what is right."

Mr. H. "The knowledge of right comes in doing it."

Mr. L. (with a startled look). Do you give that as an axiom?"

Mr. H. "Well, I won't say as to that. What I want to convey is, that there is more than one way of knowing things. For example, love only can recognize love."

Mr. L. (quickly). "You would say, then, that all knowledge is a matter of experience?"

Mr. H. "With a qualification I would. The qualification is that consciousness embraces more than is usually meant by the word experience. Subject to that reservation, I agree with you."

Mr. L. "Well, you give me something to think about. I like your idea that knowledge of right comes in doing it. Tell me what is your particular object?"

Mr. H. "Frankly, I want to be of some good to you if I can; but to me the greatest good seems that which Christ offers to all who will accept it."

Mr. L. "Ah, Christ! There are so many Christs! Which of them am I to follow?"

Mr. H. "The Christ of the New Testament and of your own conscience."

Mr. L. (again regarding H. with a penetrating look). "I object to personification. The Bible personifies God, and so does your famous design argument."

Mr. H. "The way the design argument used to be put, though right in substance, was yet defective in form. But what is your objection to it?"

Mr. L. (strongly). "It makes of God an almighty mechanic."

Mr. H. "Well, what if it does?"

Mr. L. "What if it does! It is a low, unworthy conception of God."

Mr. H. "It is certainly not the highest. But the theory of an almighty mechanic is better than the theory of an almighty machine, which is what the theory of blind force comes to. For the mechanic knows what he is doing and why, the machine does not."

Mr. L. (slowly). "That is a way of looking at it I had not thought about. But as a matter of fact I do not believe in *blind* force. I admit adaptation, and I can hardly deny that adaptation implies purpose in some sense, though it is not easy to say what the purpose is."

Mr. H. "I suppose you mean in its entirety? There I agree with you. The eternal purpose of God cannot be known to us except in part. But 'evolution' is a great help in enabling us to realize that that purpose is measurelessly larger than we thought."

Mr. L. (appreciatively). "That's it. The design writers seem to fancy they know all about it."

Mr. H. "Well, evolution explains that also. They were right enough in seeing purpose. But the scientific knowledge of their time did not enable them to see that the purpose might be other and greater than that they described."

Mr. L. "Very likely. But I do not grant that the perception of purpose justifies you in personifying God."

Mr. H. "That depends on what you mean by personifying. It may not justify us in saying absolutely God is a Person, but we are justified, on that and other grounds, in saying He is not less than Personal."

Mr. L. "I do not understand. To use the word personal, in any sense, in relation to God, is an unworthy conception."

Mr. H. "I am not sure that I understand you. But



I will try to put it before you in orderly fashion. I suppose what you object to is anthropomorphism?"

Mr. L. "Yes, decidedly."

Mr. H. "But how is it possible to escape from it? Not to appeal to the evolution account of the genesis of ideas, the mere fact that we are men shows that our ideas must be anthropomorphic, though it does not follow that that of which we have ideas is anthropomorphic also."

Mr. L. "That is just it. We needlessly make God resemble ourselves."

Mr. H. "But what if that be the highest idea we are able to form?"

Mr. L. "How can it be? To make out that God is like ourselves is ridiculous."

Mr. H. "But what if the right way of putting it be that, in certain respects, we are like God, and that it was one purpose of Christ from the first word of the Bible to the last, through all life, from its appearance in the seen to its disappearance in the unseen, to purify us from all unworthy elements of unlikeness?"

Mr. L. "Wait a bit! I shall have to think about that. But the teaching of the Church is not, that, in certain ways, man resembles God, which may or may not be true, but that God resembles man, which cannot be true."

Mr. H. "In one sense you are right in saying that cannot be true. Strictly, we can hardly say the infinite resembles the finite, or the absolute the relative. But though God does not resemble man, man, in certain aspects, resembles God. You will admit that we have some consciousness, however indefinite, of a Being that transcends all limits; otherwise, the terms finite and relative would have no meaning? And that the finite

or relative and the infinite or absolute have the one feature in common that both exist ? ”

Mr. L. “Granted.”

Mr. H. “But if we resemble God in the fact of being, may we not also say we resemble Him in the fact of being conscious, provided we bear in mind that His consciousness is without limitation ? ”

Mr. L. “Granted.”

Mr. H. “May we not also say that we resemble Him in the fact that we are volitional, so long as we remember that His purpose, unlike ours, is without limitation ; that is, instead of being marked by succession and restriction, is eternal and omnipresent ? ”

Mr. L. “Granted.”

Mr. H. “May we not further say that the quality of goodness, though in us limited and defective, constitutes another resemblance to Him, so long as we remember that His goodness is without defect, without limit ? ”

Mr. L. “Granted. But it is not thus the Church represents God.”

Mr. H. “Let us see. The Church affirms that God is without body, parts, or passions.”

Mr. L. “No such thing ! At the chapel I attended I was taught that God was just what I should call a very big man ! ”

Mr. H. “Do you really mean that ? I, at least, have never been so taught. I have often heard sceptics sarcastically remark that the Bible says man was made in the image of God, and man returns the compliment by making God in *his* image, but I was not prepared to find there was so much ground for the statement.”

Mr. L. “Well, so it is. But do you mean to say your Church does not teach that ? ”

Mr. H. "Assuredly it does not."

Mr. L. "I always thought it did, and that it taught also that to cast any doubt on it was at least to imperil the soul's salvation."

Mr. H. "I cannot answer for individuals, but there is no such teaching in the authorized creeds."

Mr. L. "Then there are many passages in the Bible which you ought to expunge to make it fit your teaching."

Mr. H. (smiling). "That is a keen thrust. But you are too much of an evolutionist not to see that any revelation must be gradual. Language is not only allowable, but necessary, in its lower stages, which would be unnecessary and unallowable in the higher stages. Besides, figurative language has a recognized place in all literature, and I very much doubt if any Jew ever understood the words to which you refer as implying that God had literally hands, etc."

Mr. L. "Well, I'll think it all over. I value sympathy much, and you have put things in a way I have not been used to."

Mr. H. "You would find your vicar as sympathetic as you have found me. The main thing for any man is to live up to the light he has while he is trying to get more. I wish I could persuade you to come to church."

Mr. L. "Do you know what Cobbett would have said of that?"

Mr. H. "Cobbett said many things that were true, and some that were only smart. But what would he have said in this case?"

Mr. L. "He would have said, 'That smells of the shop.'"

Mr. H. "And why should it not smell of the shop? If I were a carpenter, you would expect me to smell of

timber. I honestly think it would do you good to go to church. Why, then, should I not say so?"

Mr. L. (smiling). "I really do not know why you should not. At all events, I am very glad of this conversation. Good-bye" (shaking hands); "good-bye."

8. *Concluding Hints*.—Suppose you were called on to briefly address evidence workers, what would you say?

(a) Be sure of God; *i.e.* do not go into any controversy without the felt directing presence of God. Also, remain sure. When the inner light is in the least shaded, pray instantly and continuously till all is clear again.

(b) Be sure of yourself; *i.e.* hold yourself well in hand. Do not let reason, or imagination, or heart run away with you. The spirit of the prophet should be subject to the prophet. Regard prayer, not as a *substitute* for, but as the breath of life *in*, study and work.

(c) Be sure of your evidence. Before you try it on others, try it on yourself. Put yourself in your opponent's place, and see how it will look then. It must be very strong, or you very dull, if you do not find something that will need restating. But, mind, prefer strength to polish. Have both, if you can, but never cover weak spots with elegant phrases.

(d) Be sure of your man. To begin with, remember he is a man, and, if rightly treated, his manhood *will* bear witness for God to himself, though he, very likely, will not confess it to you. Do not treat him as if he were all head, or all heart, or all anything. Respect his whole nature, but reverence, and thus make him reverence, his, any, every one's, *conscience*.

(e) Be sure of your object. Do not change your aim as the firing goes on. You wish to win your man. Stick to that. Pulverizing him, even if you are strong and

hard enough to do it, is no good. Every atom of the powder will cry out still against you. You want him to honour, love, and obey, not you, but Christ.

(f) Be sure of your temper. If you cannot keep your temper, you cannot keep your place. You will be driven off the field. That does not matter much if you alone suffer. But you may make Christ suffer too. I mean more than not being angry. Keep the temper of humility, and love, and courage. Do not dare to be afraid. God is in you.

(g) Be sure of your opponent's difficulty, not simply of his objection. This is tremendously important. Every man that is, fundamentally, a sceptic is such from one or both of two causes. (1) He has not found in his experience that Christianity is real; for example, he has not found that God has answered *his* prayers. (2) He has adopted as exclusive the mechanical theory of the universe, which leaves no room for moral freedom. Never forget this. Very likely he will forget, but that is nothing to you. Answer his objections, whatever they are, if you can, but go straight through them to their causes. Rouse in him the consciousness of moral freedom, and the disposition to trust God. These are in him somewhere; try to get at them, and bring them up, and keep them uppermost.





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